

THE Atlantic

JUNE 2005

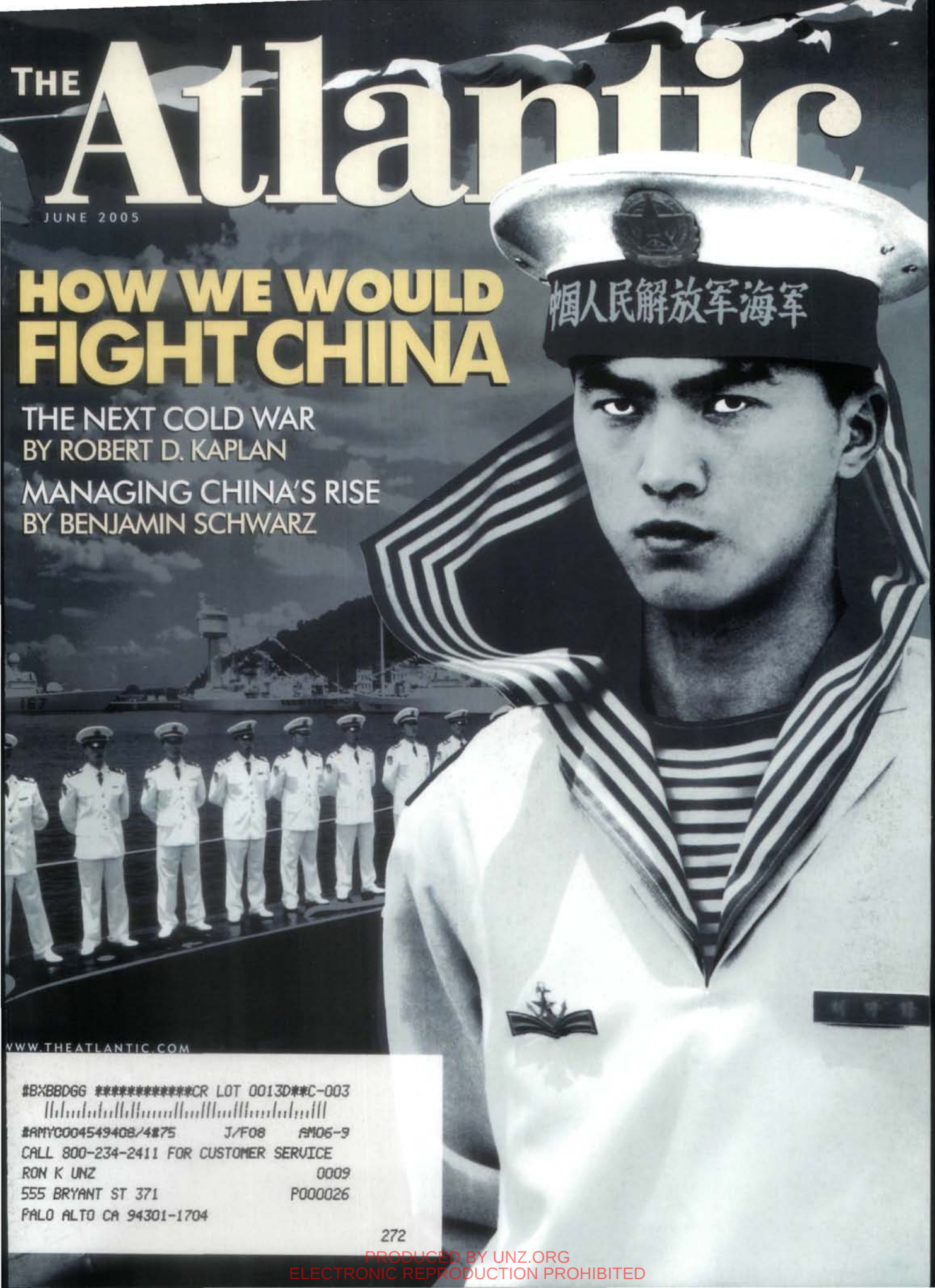
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BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

MANAGING CHINA'S RISE

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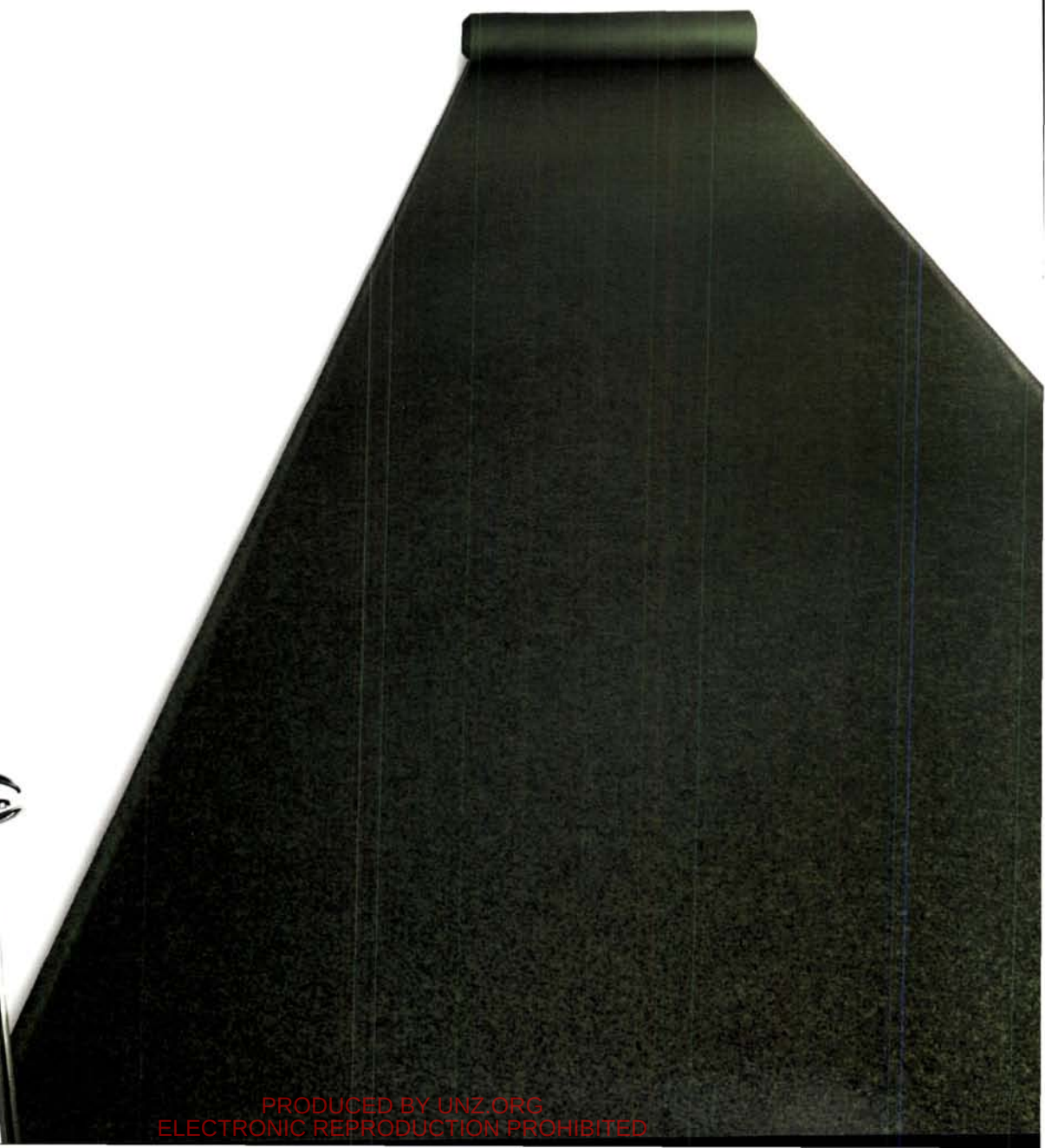
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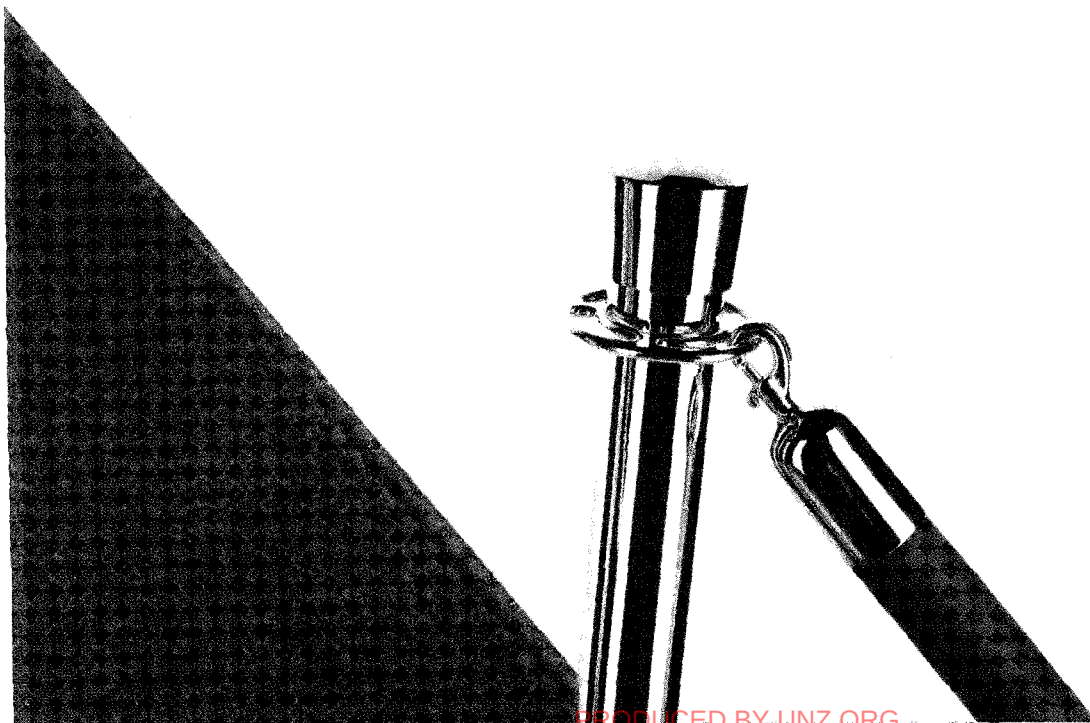


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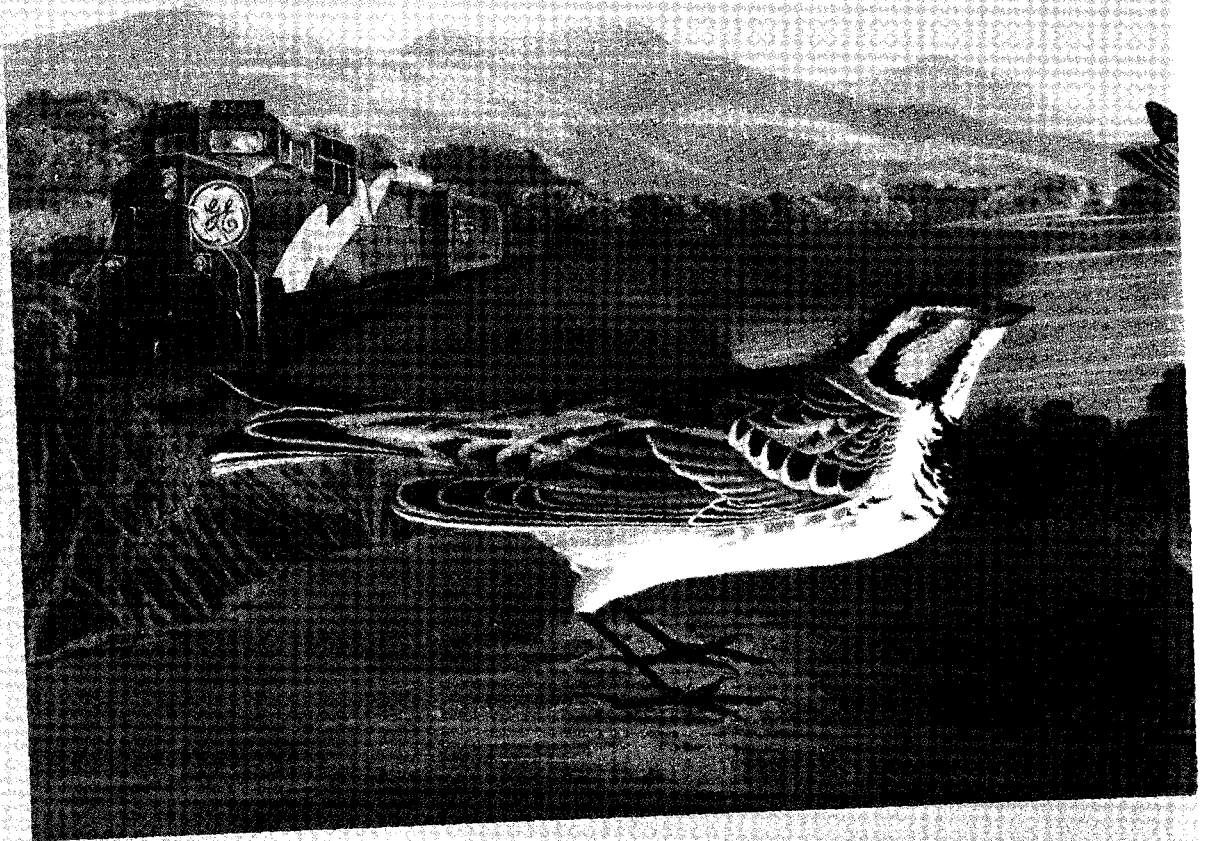


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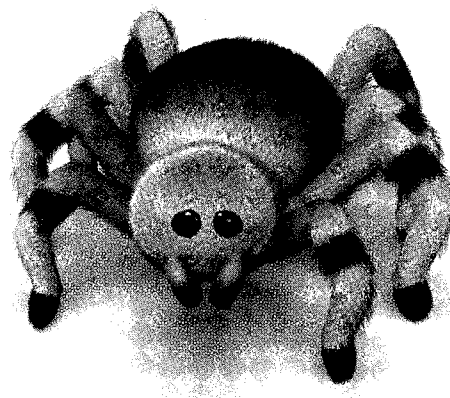
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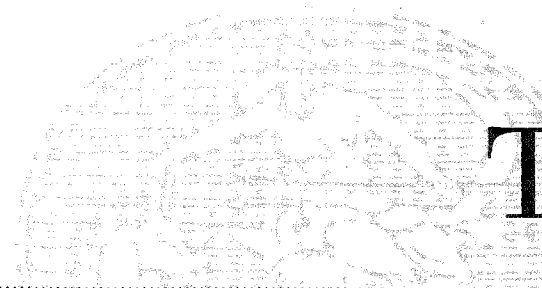
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Cathedral Cove, Coromandel.

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INTERVIEW

The author of "How We Would Fight China" discusses the rise of China's military and the looming prospect of a U.S.-Chinese cold war.

FLASHBACK

In the 1930s a series of articles by the French author Raoul de Roussy de Sales commented on politics, courtship, and identity in American life.

FLASHBACK

Henry Kissinger

Articles on his career and legacy by Seymour Hersh, Robert D. Kaplan, and others.

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JUNE 7

The World Series of Makeovers

In a true clash of fashion opposites, the Boston Red Sox have submitted to a different kind of umpire. At their wives' request, the notoriously unkempt World Series champions began spring training with makeovers from the cast of the hit TV show *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. The episode airs today. Expect a less than complete makeover for the hirsute Sox outfielder Johnny Damon—a publishing contract stipulates that he not trim his good-luck mane.

JUNE 15

Stock Options Toe the Bottom Line

Today the Financial Accounting Standards Board pulls the plug on pain-free accounting for stock options, the popular perk of the 1990s tech boom—one that,

critics say, helped falsely inflate earnings. Companies that offer options must now record them as an expense, rather than burying their estimated value in a footnote on income statements. Silicon Valley firms that fought the change are planning a variety of gimmicks to soften the blow, such as rejiggering the numbers used to estimate the value of options.



JUNE 17

Iranian Elections

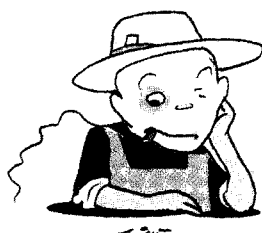
Negotiations over Iran's suspected nuclear-weapons program, stalled pending the outcome of today's vote, could pick up steam once a new government is in place. The previous election was a debacle for reformists, who were disqualified by the thousands from running for parliament. Moderate Iranian voters, resigned to reformists' slim chances under the country's strict Islamic government, now support a pragmatic conservative—the former president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, who is considered cagey but willing to engage with the United States. Some Westerners hope he will lead

JUNE 17

Tobacco Quotas, Up in Smoke

Since 1938 tobacco farmers have been guaranteed a set price for their crop (government-subsidized, if necessary) in exchange for limiting production. Now the government is ending the quota program with a \$10.1 billion

buyout, spread over ten years, and farmers have until today to sign up to receive their cut. North Carolina gets the lion's share; \$3.8 billion, with a median payment of \$14,798. A Kentucky economist has predicted that half to three quarters of tobacco producers will use their cash to quit the industry, which has suffered from overseas competition and a dwindling American taste for cigarettes.



CALENDAR

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

a group of economically minded conservatives to adopt a "China model" path toward reform—one that allows economic and cultural liberalization even as political repression continues.

JUNE 27

Britain Builds an Empire

When the Man Group, a British investment company, began sponsoring the United Kingdom's prestigious Booker Prize for fiction, it proposed expanding eligibility outside the Commonwealth to include Americans (thus interesting American book buyers). The suggestion was greeted with sniffs and huffs. So Man created a new, biennial Booker International Prize for lifetime achievement in fiction, to be awarded (along with \$110,000) today in Edinburgh.



All English-language writers, and those whose work has been translated into English, are eligible. Margaret Atwood, Gabriel García Márquez, Günter Grass, Milan Kundera, Tomás Eloy Martínez, Ian McEwan, Philip Roth, Muriel Spark, and John Updike are on the shortlist of eighteen.

JUNE 30

Rehnquist Retirement?

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who has been slowed by thyroid cancer

but continues to review cases, is widely expected to step down at the close of this Supreme Court term, in late June. For the past few months culture warriors from both sides have been quietly preparing battle strategies for when Bush nominates his replacement. However furious the fight over Rehnquist's successor becomes, it will pale before those expected in the wake of liberal retirements, which will actually change the Court's balance of power.

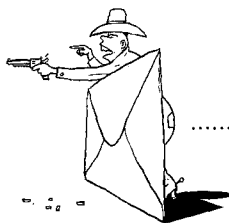


JUNE 30

Ivan the Terribly Difficult to Identify

John Demjanjuk, an ailing eighty-four-year-old retired auto worker, has already been expelled from the United States once before: in 1986, after he was identified as "Ivan the Terrible," a notorious Ukrainian gas-chamber operator at Treblinka. He was tried in Israel and sentenced to hang. Then the Israeli Supreme Court decided that American Nazi hunters had the wrong man, and returned him to Ohio. Today the United States will make another attempt to deport him, in a hearing based on evidence that Demjanjuk worked at three other death camps, where 450,000 people were murdered.

—MATTHEW QUIRK



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Accuser

After the success of the Iraqi elections, I'm afraid that William Lange-wiesche's tendentious piece "The Accuser" (March *Atlantic*) reads rather badly. The reporting on Hania Mufti and her tireless work in documenting the horrors of Saddam Hussein's regime is very interesting, and the revelation of the double standard of the "human-rights" agency is extraordinary: Yes, document the atrocities, but no, don't accept that invading Iraq will actually stop them, when nothing else can; and yes, insist on trying Saddam, but in that oh-so-efficient court of The Hague (which has had such notable success in nailing Milosevic, after all) and not, heaven forbid, in an Iraqi national court, when everyone knows the Iraqis are stupid and vengeful, like all Arabs! But the whole carping tone of Langewiesche's piece—with, for example, scare quotes around the word "liberated"—made me see red. Either you are with the much maligned, much oppressed, much patronized Iraqi people or you aren't. They were liberated indeed, from the regime of a monster. Saddam's reign of terror is ended forever, and his sons will never be able to take over. Whatever one may think of the mistakes of the Bush administration in Iraq, that simple fact will never change.

What's more, the Iraqis are showing, with extraordinary dignity and fortitude, just what they are capable of. I think the trials will continue to show that. Or does Langewiesche, like so many well-meaning people, think only Westerners are capable of a true sense of justice?

*Sophie Masson
Invergowrie, Australia*

In "The Accuser," William Lange-wiesche quotes a report on Iraqi prisoners who were deliberately bled to death: "The amount of haemoglobin

remains very low (2–4 ml per 100 mm)." This is an obvious error in translation, on a level with referring to a number of eggs in units of watts per inch. Earlier in the same article he refers to thallium as a lethal powder. Thallium is a metal, and cannot be made available in powdered form because of its reactivity with air. Powdered compounds of thallium have been used as poisons. But they are as distinct from thallium as sodium metal (also reactive with air and thus not available in powder form) is from common table salt.

*Marshall E. Deutsch
Sudbury, Mass.*

Host

I am the subject of April's twenty-three-page cover story, "Host," by David Foster Wallace.

I felt it was both very interesting and, for the most part, quite truthful. But the reporting included several minor inaccuracies, and a few important misimpressions were created in the telling of the story.

My biggest complaint, however, is that despite my pleas that it do so, *The Atlantic* chose not to update readers on what happened in the eight months after Wallace stopped shadowing my radio show: the ratings skyrocketed in the spring and fall of 2004, and thanks to this success my show was moved up to the 7:00 P.M. time slot, replacing the local legend Phil Hendrie. I have also completed a book called *The Death of Free Speech*, which will be in bookstores in July of this year.

Choosing not to update the reader on what occurred in the extremely long period between research and publication (especially in an age when day-old news is considered ancient) was much like telling the story of World War II and stopping after Pearl Harbor.

But as disappointed as I was that

Atlantic readers would not know how the story is currently turning out, I was even more disappointed by Wallace's decision to decline an invitation to appear on my show. After being given a month's worth of free access to my show and my life, I thought Wallace would have the decency to answer a few simple questions about his writing. He apparently lacks the courage to do so.

*John Ziegler
KFI Radio Los Angeles
Burbank, Calif.*

I found the format of the article "Host" too cute by half and extremely annoying. Perhaps it was an experiment worth conducting; I commend you for your willingness to innovate. But please never repeat it!

*David Cade
Montgomery, Ala.*

I was delighted to read "Host." Not only was the content wonderfully tragicomic and well written, but the colored highlights offered a nice creative and practical effect.

*Stephen Cloughley
Yardley, Pa.*

Editors' Note:

A passage in "Host" incorrectly implied that the daily installments of Dr. Laura Schlessinger's radio program airing on KFI in Los Angeles are pre-recorded rather than broadcast live. Although a taped version of the daily broadcast airs in some markets, The Dr. Laura Program is carried live by KFI.

The whole aim of David Foster Wallace's article was to provide a deep description of life at a radio station in a narrow moment in time. Wallace therefore did not describe subsequent events affecting any of the people presented in this cross section.

Wallace has turned down a dozen requests to do radio interviews. He works in print.

The colonial me *was* born on distant shores.

She set sail for a better life in a new land.

*There, a man rich in means, but starved in
romance, courted her with poetry and dance,*

*lavished her with fine goods
and European fashion.*

They married and had many children.

Apparently,

fear of commitment had yet to be invented.



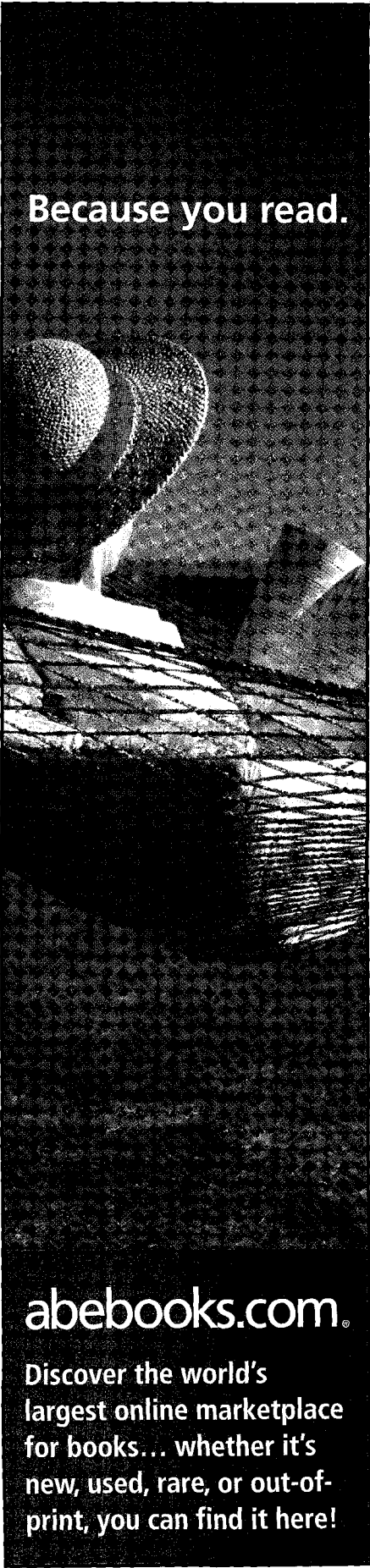
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Wilson and Bush

David M. Kennedy ("What 'W' Owes to 'WW,'" March *Atlantic*) is right on target in pointing out the intellectual debt President Bush owes to President Woodrow Wilson. Unfortunately, he did not pursue the differences between the two.

Wilson sought to accomplish global organization through other than military means. The proposed League of Nations, whatever its subsequent inadequacies, was built on the idea that U.S. power had to meet that of other nations in an international political concert. The Bush administration's "my way or the highway" approach violates the principles that Wilson was promulgating.

The differences between Wilson and Bush are startling. Rather than undertake the difficult and tedious work of building coalitions, Bush has demonstrated, ever since the rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, a new form of unilateralism and isolationism that has led the United States into an impasse in international political life.

*William H. Friedland
Isebill V. Gruhn
Professors Emeritus
University of California at Santa Cruz*

David Kennedy omits reference to Woodrow Wilson's involvement in the American military interventions in Nicaragua (1912, initiated by Wilson's predecessor, William Howard Taft), Haiti (1915), and the Dominican Republic (1916), which combined elements of realpolitik and what FDR's Latin America expert, Sumner Welles, described as "the role of the evangel ... to reform ... the conditions of life and government of the ... sovereign republics of the American hemisphere."

Kennedy effectively traces the ideological continuity instilled in American foreign policy by the idea that "these values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society." But the dubiousness of that credo is underscored by the aftermath of those three Caribbean interventions, in which Wilson played such a prominent role:

• In 1936, three years after the

Marines departed from Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza García took control of the country, initiating a dictatorial dynasty that would last forty-three years. Its collapse, in 1979, led to another U.S. military intervention, through aid to the contras in the 1980s.

• The Marines left Haiti in 1934. Haitian politics soon returned to the authoritarianism, exploitation, and corruption that had characterized most Haitian governments since the country won its independence, in 1804. That continuity was symbolized by the Duvalier dynasty, which abused the country from 1957 to 1986. The American military returned in 1994, to reinstall President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and again in 2004, to escort Aristide out and help try to make order out of chaos.

• The democratic institutions installed by the United States in the Dominican Republic started to unravel soon after the Marines left, in 1924. In 1930 Rafael Leonidas Trujillo assumed dictatorial powers; he ruled until another U.S. military intervention, in 1965.

These three cases demonstrate how good intentions, reinforced by money and the military, can be frustrated by cultures that are not congenial to democratic institutions. The idea that "these values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society" ignores not only the three cases cited but also the more general problems of democratization in the Islamic world, Africa, and Latin America. The credo also ignores the wisdom of Alexis de Tocqueville: "I am convinced that the luckiest of geographic circumstances and the best of laws cannot maintain a constitution in despite of mores, whereas the latter can turn even the most unfavorable circumstances and the worst laws to advantage. The importance of mores is a universal truth to which study and experience continually bring us back."

*Lawrence E. Harrison
The Fletcher School, Tufts University
Medford, Mass.*

*David M. Kennedy replies:
Professors Friedland and Gruhn rightly
note that George W. Bush's version of Wil-*

sonianism in fact egregiously out-Wilsons Wilson, who had a historian's skepticism about the universal application of democratic practices and institutions. Indeed, some of the very interventions in Latin America that Professor Harrison cites were known to Wilson and undoubtedly tempered his missionary impulse. But Wilson also believed that, for better or worse, his countrymen were all but incapable of conducting any consistent foreign policy under conditions of duress and duration absent the legitimating rationale of "making the world safe for democracy." That, I believe, was the dark implication of the concluding sentence of Wilson's war address in 1917: that "God helping her, she can do no other." Therein lies the chronic unrealism—and perhaps the true tragedy—of American diplomacy.

The Truth About Harvard

Ross Douthat's "The Truth About Harvard" (March *Atlantic*) is hardly the whole truth, as he would surely concede. He is right to say that the faculty does not push students. The reality,

however, is messier than that. Plenty of undergraduates, thriving on their freedom, push themselves. What I see is harder work producing better grades. But even good students are currently deprived of the pushing they need.

Is it simply because they are "well taught" that some "few Core classes" are "swamped"? Surely it is chiefly because these heavily enrolled courses typically expound contemporary topics and late-modern histories that seem relevant and are easy to study. "The Cuban Revolution: 1956–71," by all accounts an excellent course, falls under a guideline originally devised to require all students to study some pre-twentieth-century history!

That masses of Harvard graduates have lately escaped all pre-modern history—even concentrators need do no more than ten weeks of it!—is a colossal failure of advising and curriculum. For an administration now sensibly urging all undergraduates to study abroad, and this at a university ever more insistent on policy and development (that is, on present and future),

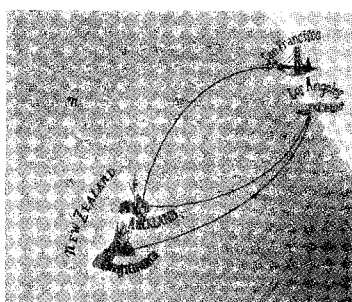
it is astounding how careless of the live past we have become. Careless, I mean, of those remote pasts that alone explain the monuments and museums those students will visit; careless of those distant pasts, humanely imagined and imaginatively reconstructed, that alone can place our fragile present in perspective. Some of our founding fathers and mothers studied only a past of this description, and were hardly the worse for that.

What most "pushes" Harvard students today is the insidious crush of the present. The advising system for freshmen resourcefully devised by Dean Elizabeth Nathans, and brusquely overturned last year, was my own hope for the future. It remains unclear whether the review committees currently at work understand why the system was overturned; and while my input matters little, the consequences for Harvard are huge.

Thomas N. Bisson
Professor of Medieval History
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.



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My problem with "The Truth About Harvard" is that it purports to give the inside scoop on "the" Harvard experience, instead of making it clear that Ross Douhat's lackluster experience was defined less by Harvard as an institution than by the self-admittedly lazy choices Douhat made as an undergraduate. For example, it's disappointing to read a harsh critique of "The Portrait," a class I immensely enjoyed, only to learn that the author actually has no idea how interesting the course might be, because "by the middle of the semester [he] had stopped going to the lectures." Perhaps Douhat would have benefited after all from the history-department courses emphasizing "exhaustive primary research."

I disagree that the emphasis of Core classes at Harvard is "squarely on methodology, not material"—or at least I maintain that the two aren't mutually exclusive. Douhat claims "not to denigrate the more whimsical and esoteric choices that fill out a course catalogue," but his description of the course on the Cuban Revolution does just that. He writes: "It seems deeply disingenuous, at best, to suggest that in the development of a broadly educated student body the study of Castro's regime carries the same weight as, say, knowledge of the two world wars, or the French Revolution, or the founding of America." Would Douhat argue that the knowledge—both the material and the methodology for examining information—that I took away from the "micro-history" course "America and Vietnam: 1945–1975" is less relevant as I read articles about Iraq in *The Atlantic* today than the knowledge I might have gained in a survey course on the American Revolution? I wouldn't argue that it's *more* relevant, but I hope he doesn't believe it's really less so.

Kristin Gilliss
Harvard Class of 1999
Valencia, Philippines

"The Truth About Harvard" slides into a familiar series of caricatures of postmodernism, and this is perhaps where, unwittingly, Ross Douhat proves his central contention: the argument does not show the kind of understanding of and engagement with the

subject that a worthy critique requires. His review of Harvard's Core Curriculum rests on the silent assumption that an education consists of subject matter, and he doesn't seem to grasp that what he's looking at is structured around modes of inquiry. When you learn a language, the particular words you acquire don't matter nearly so much as the grammar—the rules for linking them together in a sensible way. I think Douhat really was slacking on this part, and is relying on charm to prevent readers from seeing how superficial the treatment is. C+ here.

I note Douhat's complaint about unenthusiastic and overburdened faculty members and teaching assistants; perhaps he should have chosen an institution where the primary mission is undergraduate teaching, rather than research, grant competition, and publication. Students and parents might consider the public liberal arts colleges. I know of one highly selective institution where the seats remain quite full right through the end of the semester, and where students aren't on their own to select thirty-two classes from the overwhelming array of options, but receive direct and individual guidance. The new Core Curriculum Harvard will be voting on looks quite a bit like the one we constructed five years ago. They're catching up.

Adam Brooke Davis
Director of Interdisciplinary Studies
Truman State University
Kirksville, Mo.

I find it ironic that the same issue of *The Atlantic* that includes an essay lamenting the debasement of the liberal arts education at our nation's most renowned university fails to include any short fiction.

Steven Burns
Birmingham, Ala.

Ross Douhat replies:

Professor Bisson makes an excellent point regarding the bias toward contemporary historical topics at Harvard and elsewhere—a trend that one can also see at work in the diminished emphasis on Latin and Greek, the move from political philosophy to more economic, data-driven

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models of politics, and so on across the curriculum. And he's entirely correct that Harvard's undergraduate advising system (not to mention the achievement-obsessed culture of elite higher education) does nothing to encourage students to escape "the insidious crush of the present."

Kristin Gilliss and I will have to agree to disagree about whether "The Portrait" was a good class. And while she's right about the educational benefits of studying U.S. involvement in Vietnam, I would still argue that a curriculum in which a single class on Vietnam might be the only history course that a student ever takes is a failed curriculum—or not really a curriculum at all.

I plead guilty to Adam Davis's charge that I would prefer an education structured around actual "subject matter" rather than "modes of inquiry." His parallel to learning a language's grammar before learning its vocabulary is appealing but ultimately unsustainable, not least because, judging from my experience with high school French, even the study of grammar is preceded by a reasonable period of basic vocabulary building. Imagine taking a foreign-language course in which the teacher didn't distinguish in importance between knowing the word for "is" and knowing the word for "pomegranate," and you'll have some idea of how Harvard's "approaches to knowledge" system works. And although I take Davis's point that Harvard is a research university and not simply a liberal arts college, I don't see why such a large and resource-rich institution shouldn't be able to devote at least some attention to a decent advising system and a comprehensive set of liberal arts requirements. But I'm delighted to hear that his school is having more success.

Spanking

Sandra Tsing Loh, in "Marshal Plan" (March *Atlantic*), suggests that "today's cutting-edge parents" spank their children, and jovially commends them for doing so.

Corporal punishment of children—regardless of how "moderate," and no matter by whom dispensed—is considered a violation of international human-rights law. The practice violates at least six human-rights treaties: the

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the American Convention on Human Rights; and the European Social Charter.

Moreover, a rapidly growing number of countries have outlawed all physical chastisement of children. As of this writing twelve nations—Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Romania, Sweden, and Ukraine—have banned spanking by law. Israel has done the same by a judicial decision of its highest court.

This article treats the subject of spanking with the lighthearted wit of a sitcom mom driven to distraction by the naughtiness of her sitcom children. No amount of humor, however, can hide the fact that all corporal punishment of children violates their human rights and may cause them serious harm.

Susan H. Bitensky
Michigan State University College of Law
East Lansing, Mich.

Sandra Tsing Loh replies:

I am surprised to see myself depicted as the jovial leader of a new national spanking movement. My essay described my specific interest in such discipline methods as frowning, yelling, and—yes, it would be fair to say—some calibrated disfigurement of Barbies. Given my central argument that nuts-and-bolts parenting advice is welcome in times when the cultural pendulum has swung so far away from punishment that even use of the word "no" is frowned on, leaving worriedly conscientious parents of kicking, screaming toddlers without any tools except hugging, Susan Bitensky's invocation of international law seems a willful missing of the point. Her letter illustrates once again America's dearth of truly useful parenting advice.

Letting Go of Roe

Benjamin Wittes makes a very convincing argument in "Letting Go of Roe" (January/February *Atlantic*), but a few points call for further reflection.

American public opinion as a whole cannot provide a safety net against the loss of a constitutional right. Popular opinion at the state level will determine the legality of abortion. And although most Americans believe that abortion ought to be legal under some circumstances, according to the most recent Gallup poll most Americans do not describe themselves as "pro-choice." Most analysts think the pro-life campaign has something to do with this, since it was only a few years ago that the majority of Americans described themselves just that way.

While it may be true that this campaign is galvanized by Supreme Court opinions, it is just as likely to be galvanized by the legality of abortion anywhere. Look at the case of gay marriage: Georgia has passed an amendment banning gay marriage, not because Georgians are outraged by the concept of judicial intervention but because they are outraged that gay marriage could be legal anywhere in the United States, since it might "spread" to where they live. A state ban on gay marriage is not just another local ordinance: it is a way of preparing for a nationwide constitutional amendment. Locally it is seen as a sort of pre-emptive self-defense against a legislative contagion.

We are in serious trouble if individual rights are guaranteed only by explicit mention in a document that is meant to be a spare articulation of the principles that ground our laws. The point of the Constitution is not to enumerate every individual right. All that is required is that we be able to reason, with constitutional guidance, about what those rights ought to be. If leaving the rights of minorities up to the good will of the public were such a good idea, there would be no need for a constitution.

Wes Alwan
Front Royal, Va.

As a liberal Democrat raised in a conservative family, I read Benjamin Wittes's "Letting Go of Roe" with deep skepticism.

Wittes believes that if conservatives were allowed to vote on abortion, the national acrimony would subside as

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each state found its own solution. He misreads the conservative mind.

Conservatives fervently believe that aborting a zygote constitutes the murder of a human being. According to members of my family, abortion also compromises the soul that is created at conception. Add to this mix the absolute certainty that God holds these views too, and conservatives will never be placated by a "states' rights" compromise.

Wittes further assumes that overturning *Roe* will encourage more moderates to join the Democrats. Maybe; but George Bush's presidency has created such deep divisions that overturning *Roe* may not significantly expand the Democratic base. By voting for Bush in 2004, these allegedly winnable moderates have already signaled that *Roe* isn't a primary issue. This does not mean that they lack a pro-choice bias. It simply means that they, like many liberals, understand that the abortion issue involves competing claims on conscience. This creates ambivalence that militates against *Roe*'s becoming the galvanizing issue that will restore the Democrats to power.

Finally, if Democratic senators abandoned *Roe*, it could have negative electoral consequences for other liberal (moral) issues, such as Social Security and the environment. Why, after all, should a liberal bother to vote if his senator is going to cave in on key issues when the going gets tough?

In the end, sacrificing *Roe* won't heal the body politic, and it is unlikely to extend blue America's political reach into red America.

John R. Wooden
Beaverton, Oreg.

In "Letting Go of *Roe*," Benjamin Wittes essentially says, "Who cares if women have to travel to other states to get abortions, even medically necessary ones?" Apparently, Republican lawmakers care. The so-called Child Custody Protection Act would make it a federal crime to take a minor across state lines to have an abortion without notifying the minor's parents beforehand. At least twenty-one states would quickly outlaw abortion if *Roe v. Wade* were overturned, according

to a study by the Center for Reproductive Rights. We cannot, as should be obvious, rely on state legislation to protect reproductive rights.

Timothy Rood
Piedmont, Calif.

Benjamin Wittes replies:

Wes Alwan is quite correct that we are in trouble if individual rights can be guaranteed only by explicit mention in the Constitution. Indeed, many important constitutional principles—starting with judicial review itself—are not explicitly contemplated in the Constitution; rather, they are inferences from what is explicitly stated. But it does not follow that to recognize a new constitutional right we need only "be able to reason, with constitutional guidance, about what those rights ought to be." This is a recipe for judicial lawmaking of the most extravagant kind. Different people reason differently about what rights who should have. That is why we have legislatures and elections. I would submit that for a non-explicit constitutional principle—be it an individual right or anything else—to have democratic legitimacy, it must be plausibly rooted in the text, history, and structure of the document. Much as I favor abortion rights, I just can't see them as flowing plausibly from the guarantee of due process of law.

*As to John Wooden's contention that I misread the conservative mind, I venture the proposition that there exists no single conservative mind. I certainly agree that many conservatives, apparently including Wooden's relatives, are implacable on the subject of abortion. Many, however, are not, and seek not to ban abortion outright but to regulate it in ways that *Roe* does not currently permit. Is no compromise with them possible? Is it really better in conservative states to have a broad constitutional right constantly under siege than to have a somewhat narrower right protected by the legitimacy of legislative compromise? I no longer believe it is. And, more important, I am no longer willing to defend a doctrinally indefensible court decision so as to insulate my policy views from democratic debate and electoral democracy.*

Finally, one point of clarification in regard to Timothy Rood's argument that many states would quickly ban abortion. I do not doubt that the short-term conse-

*quence of overturning *Roe* would be the banning of abortion in some states. In some, in fact, unenforceable abortion restrictions are already on the books. I believe, however, that the pro-life victory in most of these states would be both Pyrrhic and short-lived. Overturning *Roe* would force people to ask themselves whether they really favor abolishing legal abortion, and would put that question front and center in the political arena, where it belongs. In the vast majority of states, I believe, the laws that would ultimately result from this healthy debate would not put onerous burdens on the right to choose.*

Bad News

I am appalled at the assertion that decreasing marriage rates for intelligent professional women is "bad news," as if marriage were the only indicator of successful womanhood ("Too Smart to Marry," Primary Sources, April *Atlantic*). I think the real bad news is for all the men who are missing out on partnerships with talented, dedicated women. And where does your characterization leave queer and lesbian women, who can't get married even if they want to? When a progressive magazine like *The Atlantic* mires itself in such patronizing language, it just goes to show how far from true equality we are as a society.

Emily Dulcan
Columbia, Mo.

Ross Douhat replies:

Emily Dulcan is right to point out that many successful and intelligent women don't marry for reasons that have nothing to do with their ability to find a mate. That said, it's hard to see how a study indicating a male preference for pursuing romance with workplace subordinates rather than equals can be characterized as good news for the many women who would like to both find a spouse and enjoy a successful career.

For the Record

"Shaken and Stirred," by Stephen S. Cohen and J. Bradford DeLong (January/February *Atlantic*), misstates findings that we report in "Has Structural Change Contributed to a Jobless Recovery?" (Federal Reserve Bank of

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New York's *Current Issues in Economics and Finance*, August 2003).

Cohen and DeLong write, "As Erica Groshen and Simon Potter ... point out, temporary layoffs have become less common." The text of our paper reads, "In the 1990–1 and 2001 recessions, temporary layoffs contributed little to the path of unemployment." That is, temporary layoffs have become less important *during recessions*, which is not the same as saying that temporary layoffs have become less common overall. Indeed, the proportion of workers on temporary layoff as a share of the labor force is not much different from the proportion seen during the expansions of the 1960s and 1970s. The change is that employers' use of temporary layoffs no longer surges during recessions, as it did before the 1990s.

Erica L. Groshen
Simon Potter
Federal Reserve Bank of New York
New York, N.Y.

J. Bradford DeLong replies:

Stephen Cohen is innocent. I'm the one who misread Groshen and Potter's excellent article. I apologize.

Puzzling Error

After spending a couple of frustrating years getting up to speed on the Puzzler, I now dive in as soon as *The Atlantic* arrives, marveling at the inventive and whimsical genius of Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon. How do they think of new structures every month, make ordinary words lock together like a Chinese puzzle, and write their superbly spare instructions? Over and over I have been certain the instructions were in error, and have been wrong every time. It seems appropriate to send this appreciation for their creativity on the occasion of a bona fide mistake in the April puzzle, "Running the Gamut" ("supplying one to three of those letters")—truly the exception that proves the rule!

Gordon F. Tully
Norwalk, Conn.

Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon reply:

Now that Gordon Tully mentions it, we have to concede that L, E, and Y, which

we implied in the instructions for our April puzzle made a total of three letters, actually come a lot closer to four. It seems we're better at word-bending than at number-crunching. Happily, having sharp-eyed solvers is something on which we can count.

March Menu

I enjoyed Christina Schwarz's review of Geraldine Brooks's novel *March*. But although I know that Bronson Alcott was a vegetarian or a vegan (and a royal pain in the neck, if you ask me), I am pretty sure Mr. March was not. Certainly the March family wasn't; they eat turkey at one point, and Marmee (or maybe Mr. March) praises Jo for "taking drumsticks at dinner." I can't imagine that the March women would have gone against the patriarch's rules, even though he had gone off to war.

In any case, the review makes me want to read the book.

Luli Gray
Chapel Hill, N.C.

Christina Schwarz replies:

Luli Gray may be right about Mr. March as rendered by Louisa May Alcott. But in my review of Geraldine Brooks's novel I was referring to the character as he appears in that book, where—like his flesh-and-blood model—he is most certainly a vegetarian and strives to be a vegan. Although Brooks's Mr. March was inspired by Alcott's, and both are versions of Bronson Alcott, the novelists' creations differ from each other.

Advice & Consent

The map illustrating "Crude Politics" (The World in Numbers, April *Atlantic*) misidentifies the nation of Jordan as Syria. Although in theory it might not be a bad idea to swap the two countries (consider the potential for more-neighborly relations in the Golan Heights, and for a decrease in Syria's appetite for occupying newly distant Lebanon), an attempt to do so by means of unilateral action on the part of *The Atlantic's* editorial staff will probably meet with resistance from ordinary Syrians and Jordanians.

Tracey Bolotnick
Boston, Mass.

I am very glad that the March issue of *The Atlantic* discusses the potential terrorist threat of unmanned aerial vehicles ("Allah Is My Co-Pilot," Primary Sources). This threat is underestimated by decision-makers, and the public needs to be aware of it.

Unfortunately, the article misidentifies my report "Terrorists Develop Unmanned Aerial Vehicles." That report was prepared by the Center for Arms Control, Energy and Environmental Studies at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, in Russia, not the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, as indicated in the article.

Eugene Miasnikov
Moscow Institute of Physics
and Technology
Moscow, Russia

I want to publicly thank Peter Davison for his generous nature toward us poets who continually inundated him with both submissions and queries for his renowned editorial skills. He always responded quickly and with a quiet certitude that encouraged young writers to continue knocking on his door. He will be missed.

Delisa Mulkey
Forest Park, Ga.

John Sellers, in his short article "Which Harry Potter Character Gets Whacked?" (The Odds, January/February *Atlantic*), describes Hermione Granger as buck-toothed. Does Sellers not know that in the fourth book (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*) Hermione gets her teeth shrunk by Madam Pomfrey?

Victoria Cecelia Catherine Elias
(age 10)
San Rafael, Calif.

Bill Roorbach's "Harbinger Hall" (December *Atlantic*) is excellent. It was one of the first pieces I read in the issue, and I hoped it would never end ... or at least would continue in a book. I can picture the whole story vividly in my head, like a movie. So creative!

Stephanie W. Gray
Portland, Ore.

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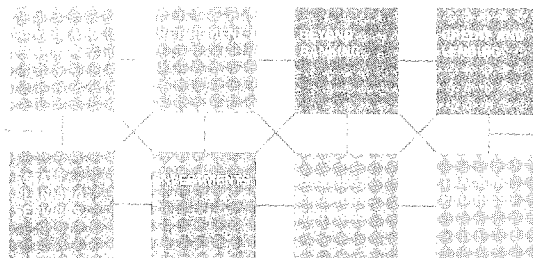


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the home waters of Singapore or Malaysia. To be sure, China's newly acquired midrange missiles, and even its diesel submarines, complicate aspects of U.S. naval planning in the eastern Pacific. The United States, however, has such a jump on Beijing in its command, control, communications, computer, and intelligence capabilities—by far the most vital elements of a modern military's effectiveness, and by far the most difficult to develop—that American strategic supremacy in East Asia will grow, not diminish, in the coming years.

Far from discouraging the rise of China and other powers, Washington should recognize the significant benefits that can result.

But these points merely deflate alarmist arguments. Given its economic dynamism, China probably will—in twenty-five years or longer—become a powerful and militarily sophisticated geopolitical actor in East Asia and the eastern Pacific. And so America's overwhelming military and political influence in the region will decline. But the United States has plenty of time to consider the implications of China's rise before it is complete. We must examine our own stance toward the world, and the way we define threats to our national security. In other words, to understand the consequences of China's (slowly) growing ambitions, we have to understand our own.

We should first acknowledge that the pace of China's military modernization and the nature of its geopolitical alignments are very much tied to the post-Cold War imbalance of power in Washington's favor. Never before in history has one state held so pre-eminent a position as that which America has enjoyed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Of course, both Democratic and Republican administrations hold that other countries regard us as a "benevolent hegemon." But in fact states must always be more

concerned with a predominant power's capabilities than with its professed intentions. China and Russia saw the U.S. intervention in Kosovo as a dangerous precedent establishing Washington's asserted right to interfere in other countries' internal affairs; and although long estranged, they formed a nascent alliance aimed expressly at re-establishing a "multipolar world." With the invasion of Iraq, of course, the world's suspicion of American hegemony intensified enormously, and now China and Russia have expanded their military cooperation and are

conducting joint military exercises. Similarly, the wars in both Kosovo and Iraq spurred Chinese military planners to focus on countering America's high-tech dominance on the battlefield. The United States

should conduct whatever foreign policies it deems appropriate—but it must recognize that actions it perceives as selfless, others will most likely see in an entirely different light. An interventionist global role may serve a number of American interests, but history has repeatedly shown that intervention by a dominant power accelerates the rise of other great powers and ensures their wariness, if not their hostility, toward it.

We should also rigorously examine how Washington defines a "China threat." Hardliners and moderates, Republicans and Democrats, agree that America is strategically dominant in East Asia and the eastern Pacific—China's back yard. They further agree that America should retain its dominance there. Thus U.S. military planners define as a threat Beijing's efforts to remedy its own weak position in the face of the overwhelming superiority that they acknowledge the United States holds right up to the edge of the Asian mainland. This probably reveals more about our ambitions than it does about China's. Imagine if the situation were reversed, and China's air and naval power were a dominant and potentially menacing presence on the coastal shelf of North America. Wouldn't we want to offset that preponderance? America's

direct sphere of influence extends from the Canadian Arctic to Tierra del Fuego, and from Greenland to Guam. Surely we can tolerate other great powers' enjoying spheres of influence in other parts of the world. China's sphere certainly includes Taiwan, which is just a hundred miles off its shore.

More generally, we have to examine the strategic implications raised when regional and great powers emerge. Americans are understandably happy with U.S. global hegemony. It's a misreading of history, however, to suggest that the rise of new great powers will perforce engender conflict. Admittedly, German interests in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could not be accommodated without hazarding the interests of others, because several great powers were crowded onto a small continent. But it's also true that in the same period the United States peacefully rose to be a great power in a region far from other great powers. Britain, the dominant naval power in the Western Hemisphere, wisely acquiesced to U.S. ascendancy there and, more important, recognized that America could collaborate with rather than challenge the effort to maintain international stability. London thereby transformed a potential conflict into a strategic partnership that has served it well for a century.

China's emergence as a great power may be inevitable, but it's going to be a long process, which we should seek to manage with Beijing. Far from discouraging the rise of China and other independent powers, such as the European Union and Japan, Washington should recognize the significant benefits that can result. There will be more jockeying for advantage in global politics; but accommodating other powers, giving them a stake in the stability of the international system, and making them share the responsibility for maintaining it can substantially reduce America's globe-girdling defense commitments and the concomitant international suspicion toward the United States. The alternative in the long run is to create enemies where none need exist. ▀

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and national editor of The Atlantic.

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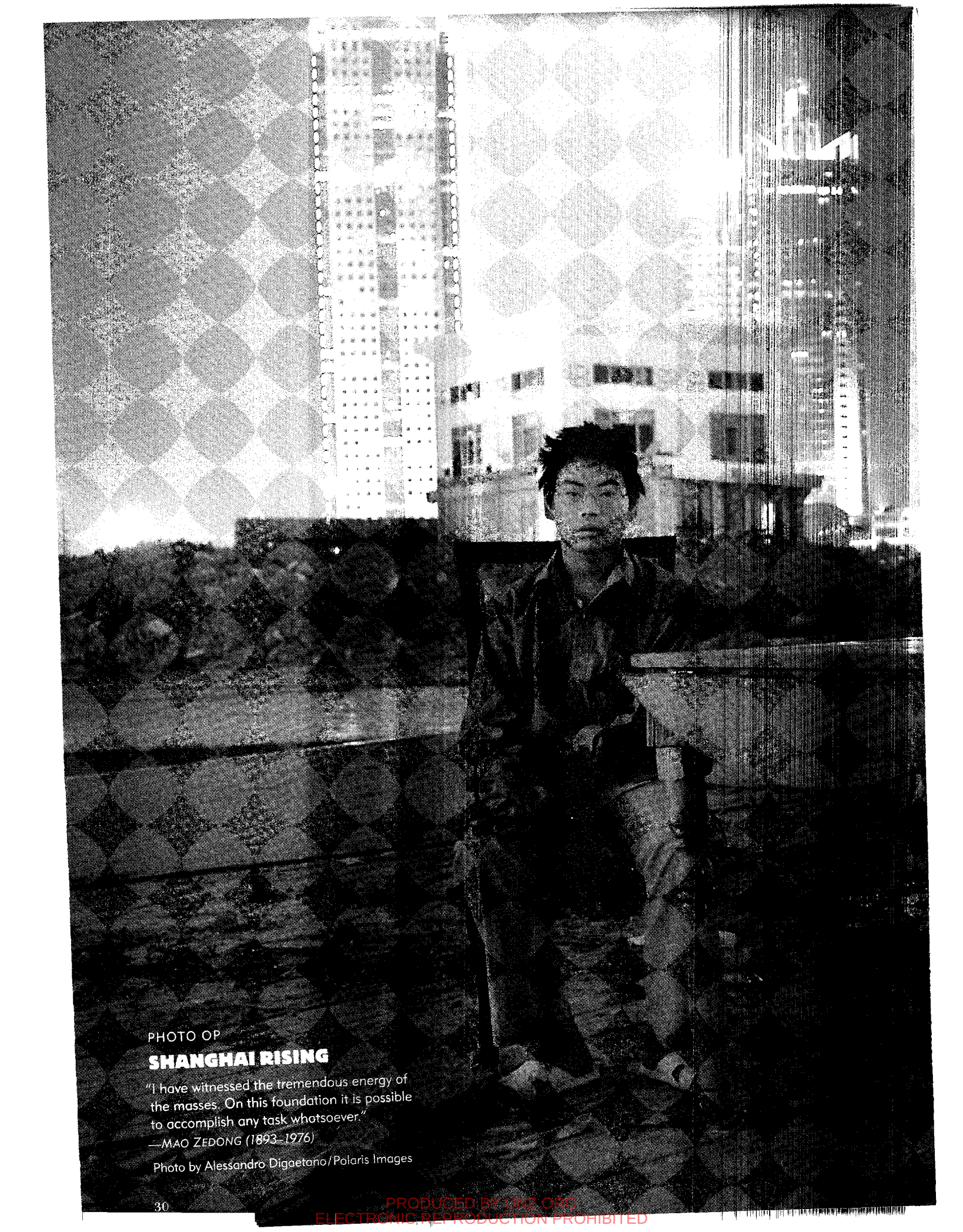


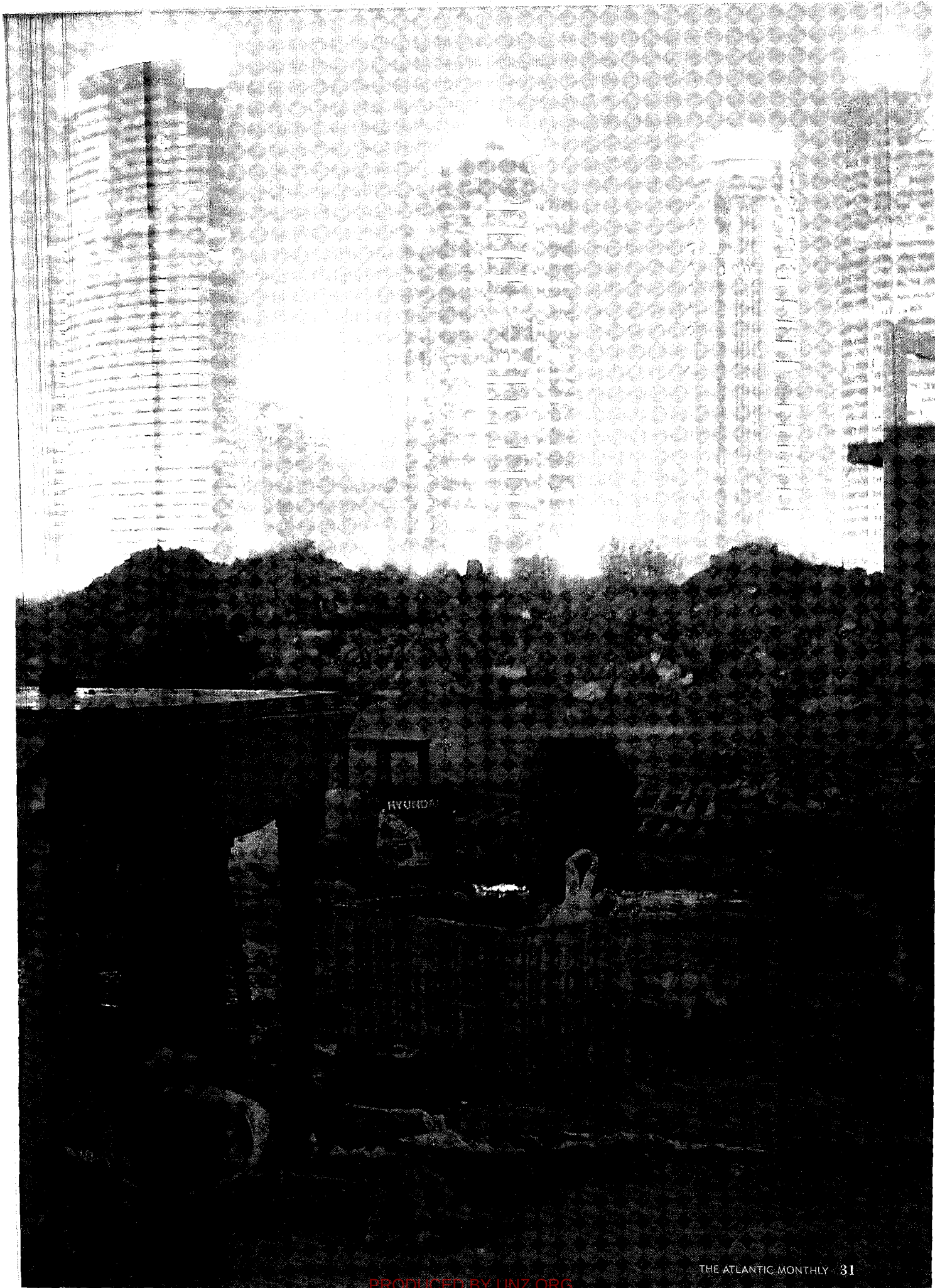
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SHANGHAI RISING

"I have witnessed the tremendous energy of the masses. On this foundation it is possible to accomplish any task whatsoever."

—MAO ZEDONG (1893–1976)

Photo by Alessandro Digaetano/Polaris Images



INTELLIGENCE

Truth Extraction

A classic text on interrogating enemy captives offers a counterintuitive lesson on the best way to get information

BY STEPHEN BUDIAISKY

Six months before the abuses at Abu Ghraib prison broke into public view, a small and fairly obscure private association of United States Marine Corps members posted on its Web site a document on how to get enemy POWs to talk.

The document described a situation very similar to the one the United States faces in the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan: a fanatical and implacable enemy, intense pressure to achieve quick results, a brutal war in which the old rules no longer seem to apply.

Marine Major Sherwood F. Moran, the report's author, noted that despite the complexities and difficulties of dealing with an enemy from such a hostile and alien culture, some American interrogators consistently managed to extract useful information from prisoners. The successful interrogators all had one thing in common in the way they approached their subjects. They were nice to them.

Moran was writing in 1943, and he was describing his own, already legendary methods of interrogating Japanese prisoners of war. More than a half century later his report remains something of a cult classic for military interrogators. The Marine Corps Interrogator Translator Teams Association (MCITTA), a group of active-duty and retired Marine intelligence personnel, calls Moran's report one of the "timeless documents" in the field and says it has long been "a standard read" for insiders. (A book about the Luftwaffe interrogator Hans Joachim Scharff, whose charm, easygoing manner, and perfect English beguiled many a captured Allied airman into revealing critical information, is another frequently cited classic in the field.) An MCITTA member says the group decided to post Moran's report online in July of 2003, because "many others wanted to read

it" and because the original document, in the Marine Corps archives, was in such poor shape that the photocopies in circulation were difficult to decipher. He denies that current events had anything to do with either the decision to post the document or the increased interest in it.



But it is hard to imagine a historical lesson that would constitute a more direct reproach to recent U.S. policies on prisoner interrogation. And there is no doubt that Moran's report owes more than a little of its recent celebrity to the widespread disdain among experienced military interrogators for what took place at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo when ill-trained personnel were ordered to "soften up" prisoners. Since the prison scandals broke, many old hands in the business have pointed out that abusing prisoners is not simply illegal and immoral; it is also remarkably ineffective.

"The torture of suspects [at Abu Ghraib] did not lead to any useful intelligence information being extracted," says James Corum, a professor at the

U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and the author of a forthcoming book on counterinsurgency warfare. "The abusers couldn't even use the old 'ends justify the means' argument, because in the end there was nothing to show but a tremendous propaganda defeat for the United States."

Corum, who recently retired as a lieutenant colonel after twenty-eight years in the Army and Reserves, mostly in military intelligence, says that Moran's philosophy has repeatedly been affirmed in subsequent wars large and small. "Know their language, know their culture, and treat the captured enemy as a human being" is how

Corum sums up Moran's enduring lesson.

Part of why Sherwood Moran became such a legendary figure among military interrogators was his cool disregard for what he termed the standard "hard-boiled" military attitude. The brutality of the fighting in the Pacific and the suicidal fanaticism of the Japanese had created a general assumption that only the sternest measures would get Japanese prisoners to divulge anything. Moran countered

that in his and others' experience, strong-arm tactics simply did not work. Stripping a prisoner of his dignity, treating him as a still-dangerous threat, forcing him to stand at attention and flanking him with guards throughout his interrogation—in other words, emphasizing that "we are his to-be-respected and august enemies and conquerors"—invariably backfired. It made the prisoner "so conscious of his present position and that he was a captured soldier vs. enemy intelligence" that it "played right into [the] hands" of those who were determined not to give away anything of military importance.

In his report (written in the form of a letter of advice to interpreters newly assigned to interrogation duty) Moran stressed that he would usually begin

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The History of French Anti-Americanism

Philippe Roger

Translated by Sharon Bowman

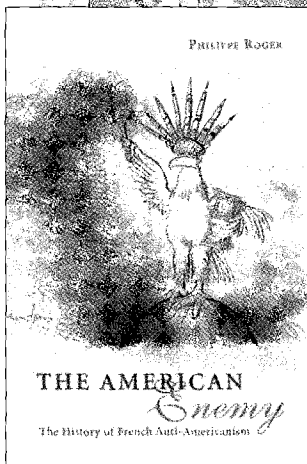
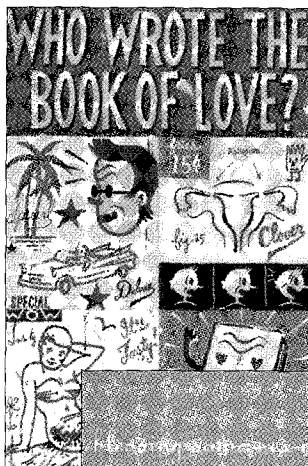
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an interrogation by taking almost the opposite tack.

I often tell a prisoner right at the start what my attitude is! I consider a prisoner (i.e. a man who has been captured and disarmed and in a perfectly *safe* place) as out of the war, out of the picture, and thus, in a way, not an enemy ... Notice that ... I used the word "safe." That is the point: get the prisoner to a safe place, where even he knows ... that it is all over. Then forget, as it were, the "enemy" stuff, and the "prisoner" stuff. I tell them to forget it, telling them I am talking as a human being to a human being.

Every soldier, Moran observed, has a "story" he desperately *wants* to tell. The interrogator's job is to provide the atmosphere that allows the prisoner to tell it.

Begin by asking him things about himself. Make him and his troubles the center of the stage, not you and your questions of war problems. If he is not wounded or tired out, you can ask him if he has been getting enough to eat; if he likes Western-style food ... You can ask if he has had cigarettes, if he is being treated all right, etc. If he is wounded you have a rare chance. Begin to talk about his wounds. Ask if the doctor or corpsman has attended to him. Have him *show* you his wounds or burns. (They will like to do this!) ...

On [one] occasion a soldier was brought in. A considerable chunk of his shinbone had been shot away. In such bad shape was he that we broke off in the middle of the interview to have his leg redressed. We were all interested in the redressing, in his leg, it was almost a social affair! And the point to note is that we really *were* interested, and not pretending to be interested in order to get information out of him. This was the prisoner who called out to me when I was leaving after that first interview, "Won't you please come and talk to me *every day*." (And yet people are continually asking us, "Are the Japanese prisoners really willing to talk?")

Moran spoke fluent Japanese, but more important, he was thoroughly familiar with Japanese culture, having spent forty years in Japan as a missionary. He used this knowledge for one of his standard gambits: making a prisoner homesick. "This line has infinite

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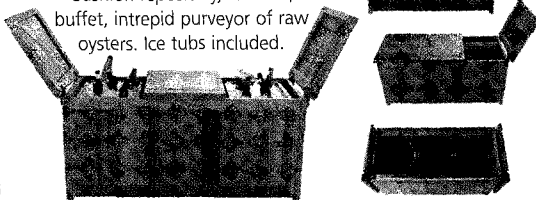
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possibilities,” he explained. “If you know anything about Japanese history, art, politics, athletics, famous places, department stores, eating places, etc. etc. a conversation may be relatively interminable.” Moran emphasized that a detailed knowledge of technical military terms and the like was less important than a command of idiomatic phrases and cultural references that allow the interviewer to achieve “the first and most important victory”—getting “into the mind and into the heart” of the prisoner and achieving an “intellectual and spiritual” rapport with him.

Moran’s whole approach—and Hans Joachim Scharff’s, too—was built on the assumption that few if any prisoners are likely to possess decisive information about imminent plans. (And as one former Marine interrogator says, even if a prisoner does have information of the “ticking bomb” variety—where the nuke is going to go off an hour from now, in the classic if over-worked example—under duress or torture he is most likely to try to run out the clock by making something up rather than reveal the truth.) Rather, it is the small and seemingly inconsequential bits of evidence that prisoners may give away once they start talking—about training, weapons, commanders, tactics—that, when assembled into a larger mosaic, build up the most complete and valuable picture of the enemy’s organization, intentions, and methods.

Moran’s report had an immediate impact. The Navy and the Marines recruited second-generation Japanese-Americans to teach an intensive one-year language course for interrogators that included a strong emphasis on Japanese culture. James Corum notes that the graduates of this course were among the most effective interrogators in the Pacific Island campaigns of 1944 and 1945: Marine interrogators deployed to the Marianas in June of 1944 were able to supply their commanders with the complete Japanese order of battle within forty-eight hours of landing on Saipan and Tinian.

In contrast, in late 2002 the mili-

tary’s Southern Command had so few interrogators and interpreters that it was forced to employ inexperienced and untrained civilian contractors to perform these jobs at Guantánamo. The officer in charge of the Joint Interrogation and Debriefing Center at Abu Ghraib had no interrogation experience himself and no skilled interrogators or interpreters working underneath him. He, too, turned to civilian contractors. Government auditors criticized these deficiencies in early 2004 and noted that several of the firms that supplied civilian contractors had no experience in such work. Yet the shortage of military interrogators continues, and the Department of Defense continues to employ people outside the military for some of this work. “They let a bunch of out-of-control contractors, CIA freelancers, untrained military-intelligence people, et cetera get turned loose under the promise and pressure of getting quick results,” Corum told me.

One of the most striking points Moran made was that those interrogators who tried the hardest to break down the morale of POWs were actually revealing their own fear—“fear that the prisoner will take advantage of you and your friendship.” This, he noted, was “the same idea that a foreman must swear at his construction gang in order to get work out of them.”

Of course there always *is* the danger that some types will take advantage of your friendliness. This is true of any phase of life, whether you are a teacher, a judge, an athletic trainer, a parent. But there is some risk in any method. But this is where the interpreter’s *character* comes in ... You can’t fool with a man of real character ...

Moran was saying that an interrogator who is genuinely tough has the confidence to know that he will always keep the upper hand, even while being nice. “Enlightened hard-boiled-ness,” he called this attitude. And he concluded that “strange as it may seem to say so,” the most important characteristic of a successful interrogator is not his experience or even his linguistic knowledge; it is “his own temperament” and “his own character.” ▀

Stephen Budiansky is an Atlantic correspondent.



BABY NAMES

Not all names are created equal. In the book *Freakonomics* the contrarian economist Steven Levitt and his co-author, Stephen J. Dubner, contend that a baby’s name indicates more than just current cultural whims: it is a testament to the socio-economic and educational background of the parents. Working from a study of more than 16 million babies born in California since 1961, the researchers concluded that some names are most common among rich people and some among poor, some in families with more schooling and some in families with less. Here is a sampling of their findings. —**TYLER CABOT**

INCOME. The name that parents give their child may be a reflection of wealth and cultural sophistication. Here are the leading names for white babies according to income.

GIRLS/HIGH

1. Alexandra
2. Lauren
3. Katherine
4. Madison
5. Rachel

GIRLS/LOW

1. Amber
2. Heather
3. Kayla
4. Stephanie
5. Alyssa

BOYS/HIGH

1. Benjamin
2. Samuel
3. Jonathan
4. Alexander
5. Andrew

BOYS/LOW

1. Cody
2. Brandon
3. Anthony
4. Justin
5. Robert

EDUCATION. A baby’s name often reflects how much education his or her mother received. Here are the white babies’ names associated with the highest and lowest levels of education in their mothers (average years of education in parentheses).

GIRLS/HIGH

1. Lucienne (16.60)
2. Marie-Claire (16.50)
3. Glynnis (16.40)
4. Adair (16.36)
5. Meira (16.27)

GIRLS/LOW

1. Angel (11.38)
2. Heaven (11.46)
3. Misty (11.61)
4. Destiny (11.66)
5. Brenda (11.71)

BOYS/HIGH

1. Dov (16.50)
2. Akiva (16.42)
3. Sander (16.29)
4. Yannick (16.20)
5. Sacha (16.18)

BOYS/LOW

1. Ricky (11.55)
2. Joey (11.65)
3. Jessie (11.66)
4. Jimmy (11.66)
5. Billy (11.69)

BRIEF LIVES

The Odd Couple

Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid, old-fashioned Democrats, have the charge—but so far few signs of the ability—to sell their party to America

BY JOSHUA GREEN

When Howard Dean crossed the stage to accept the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee, at the group's meeting last February, beleaguered party members finally found reason to cheer. Dean was always the sentimental favorite—and seemed just the sort of pugnacious character necessary to lead the fight against George W. Bush. Those cheering Democrats haven't gotten what they wanted, though. So far Dean has concentrated on building the party's infrastructure, ceding the spotlight to a pair of congressional leaders who opposed his candidacy as chairman. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid are the Democrats' new public face.

Even in a party that prides itself on diversity they make an odd pair—a liberal from San Francisco and a red-state Mormon. Pelosi is pro-choice; Reid is pro-life. She grew up in Baltimore, the daughter and sister of mayors; he's from Searchlight, Nevada, the son of a miner. What they have in common is the task of leading the Democrats out of the wilderness. As Reid told me recently, sitting beside a fireplace in his ornate office in the Capitol, "The American people are looking for help. We're all they've got."

One debate among Democrats is whether or not this should be cause for alarm. Pelosi and Reid both maintain that they expect the Democrats to win back the House and the Senate next year, and after that the presidency. But their failure to manage their own party's chairmanship race, coupled with an

aggressive Republican majority, has left many less sanguine. "Reid and Pelosi, along with [the former DNC chairman] Terry McAuliffe, were integrally involved in deciding the message and strategy in the last two elections, and we got our clock cleaned both times," says Dan Gerstein, a Capitol Hill veteran and former longtime aide to Senator Joe Lieberman. "They're both



good people. But at some point it's got to come down to cold, hard results."

Despite botching their attempt to head off Dean, Pelosi and Reid have a better track record inside Congress, where they need to persuade only their own colleagues. They have so far maintained the caucus unity necessary to obstruct the administration's greatest ambitions, from Social Security privatization to the confirmation of right-wing judges.

For a party accustomed to consistent drubbing by the White House, the most heartening thing about Bush's second term is the uniformity with which most

congressional Democrats have thus far opposed the Social Security initiative. By staking his political capital on privatizing Social Security, Bush has done the Democratic leadership the great favor of focusing national debate on a topic that—unlike tax cuts, tort reform, and the war in Iraq—divides his own party and unifies the Democrats.

The question is whether Pelosi and Reid can maintain that unity. The Republicans, their initial blitzkrieg rebuffed, now talk about a prolonged battle for privatization. And the two Democratic leaders will have to withstand the glare of national attention that will accompany what looks to be a historic showdown looming between the parties in Congress. Frustrated by

Democratic filibusters of judicial nominations, Bill Frist, the Senate majority leader, has threatened to invoke the so-called "nuclear option" and repeal the minority-empowering filibuster privilege. Reid, in turn, has promised to respond with parliamentary maneuvers that would essentially shut down the Senate.

If Pelosi and Reid are to win back Congress, they will need not only the discipline to counter Republican attacks but also the strategic ability to develop a true opposition movement—an

ability nowhere evident in their biographies. And they will need to galvanize the public, not just their fellow officeholders. Here some alarm seems warranted. Put simply, Pelosi and Reid are lousy salespeople. Although Reid prides himself on rural authenticity, he comes across on television as a long-lost Smothers Brother. And for all her grandmotherly warmth, Pelosi's peppy bursts of enthusiasm and penchant for speaking in singsong phrases—"We've gotta win, not whine!"—make her come across like a cheerfully energetic PTA mom rather than a party leader capable of swaying national opinion.

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THE NEXT PLAGUE?

Contagion through history

From last December to this writing, the disease known to epidemiologists as H5N1 avian flu infected twenty-eight people in Vietnam, killing fourteen. On the scale of global catastrophe that may not sound like a lot. But World Health Organization officials worry that a worldwide outbreak could kill as many as seven million. Human populations have proved particularly susceptible to new flu pandemics every twenty to thirty years, as flu strains mutate and overcome built-up immunities. The most recent major flu pandemic petered out in 1972, so we may be overdue. Here are some noteworthy disease outbreaks through history. —MICHAEL SLENSKE

1. Pneumonic plague. Since last December there have been some 300 suspected cases of—and at least sixty-one deaths from—pneumonic plague in eastern Congo. This is the largest plague outbreak since 1920, when more than 9,000 Manchurians succumbed.

2. Severe acute respiratory syndrome. SARS first appeared in China in November of 2002, and was soon recognized as a coronavirus that caused high fevers and fatal pneumonia. Over the course of the next eight months the disease infected more than 8,000 people and killed 774 in twenty-six countries.

3. West Nile virus. Although outbreaks of this mosquito-borne encephalitis were identified as early as 1937, in Uganda, West Nile didn't reach the United States until the summer of 1999, when it infected sixty-two people and killed seven in New York City. Since then more than 15,000 American cases—and more than 500 deaths—have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control.

4. Ebola virus. Nearly two decades after Ebola—which can turn organs into virus-ridden slime in less than a week—took the lives of 600 people in Zaire and Sudan, in 1976, it resurfaced in Zaire, infecting 316 people and killing 245 from May to July of 1995. Fifty of the victims were hospital staffers treating the outbreak.

5. Hong Kong flu. Sweeping across the Pacific from Hong Kong in early



1968, the disease reached the United States by September of that year and went on to kill 34,000 Americans in six months. Outbreaks of this strain recurred in 1970 and 1972, and may have produced a million fatalities worldwide—despite the fact that another flu eleven years earlier (see #6) is believed to have built up global resistance to the disease.

6. Asian flu. First identified by health officials in East Asia in February of 1957, this influenza traveled to the United States that summer and spread through classrooms nationwide, even though a vaccine was introduced in August of that year. The flu claimed 70,000 American lives, and a million worldwide, before dissipating in March of 1958.

7. Spanish flu. After coursing through the trenches of World War I in 1918—accounting for half of all GI deaths during the war—this bug was carried across the globe by homebound soldiers. By some estimates it infected a billion people (about half the world's population), killing 20 million to 50 million in just one year. Most victims of "la Grippe" were healthy adults aged twenty to fifty.

8. Yellow fever. Thousands of Philadelphia residents, including President George Washington, fled their city (then the nation's capital) in 1793, after seeing scores of infected people turn yellow and vomit blood. The fever—which killed 5,000 people (10 percent of Philadelphia's population at the time)—returned to the city in subsequent years, though not on the scale of the '93 epidemic.

9. Black Death. Although it is generally thought to have been transmitted from rodents to human beings, some scholars believe that the Black Death was actually a person-to-person disease. It ravaged Europe from 1347 to 1352, killing around 25 million people—nearly a third of the Continent's population.

History suggests that the most effective opposition leaders—Tom DeLay, Newt Gingrich, Lyndon Johnson—tend to be bullies who relish pool-cue-to-the-knee politics and boast tough-guy nicknames like DeLay's "The Hammer." Harry Reid's nickname is "Pinky."

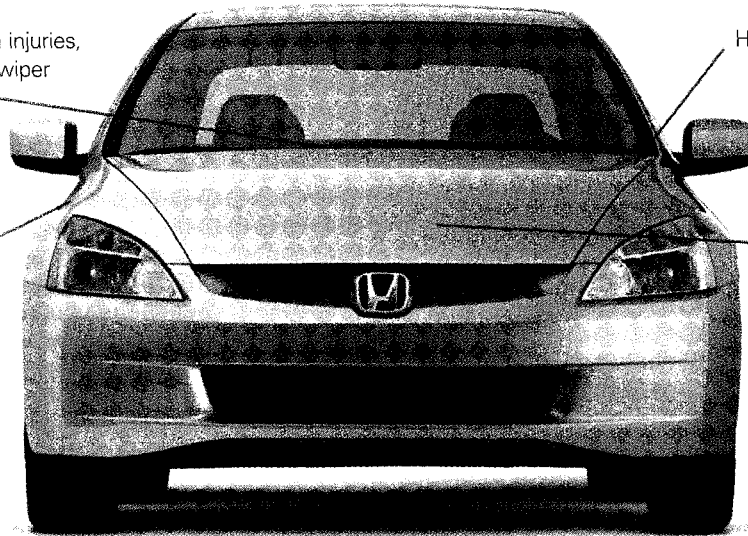
Reid ascended the ranks of the Democratic Party when it was strong, and his eventual arrival in the top spot was all but guaranteed. He has always prided himself on his humble origins. "My dad was a miner; my mother took in wash," he told me. "In my town of two hundred people we had as many as thirteen whorehouses, so that's whose wash she did." Reid worked his way through college. While there he married his high school sweetheart, Landra, and they joined the Mormon church. After graduating from law school he held a series of political jobs, eventually becoming chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission. In the late 1970s Reid targeted the mob, and it reciprocated: his wife discovered her car rigged with a bomb (which the police defused), and the Reids spent a year starting the car by remote control. Reid went on to the House of Representatives and later to the Senate, where he positioned himself to one day lead the Democratic caucus—becoming an expert on the Senate's arcane rules and serving six years as whip under Tom Daschle. Daschle's defeat last November cleared the way for an easy rise.

Pelosi, too, has political smarts and survival skills. She grew up steeped in Democratic politics—her father was a ward boss in Baltimore's Little Italy before being elected mayor, and in her office is a picture of her as a teenager meeting John F. Kennedy. Pelosi moved to California with her husband and rose through the ranks of state politics, winning her seat in Congress at the age of forty-seven. While Reid was honing his tactical skills, Pelosi excelled at the very different though equally important political skill of fundraising. She, too, served as a second-in-command, as whip to the House leader Dick Gephardt. In 2002 Gephardt broke with most of his party and supported the Republican resolu-

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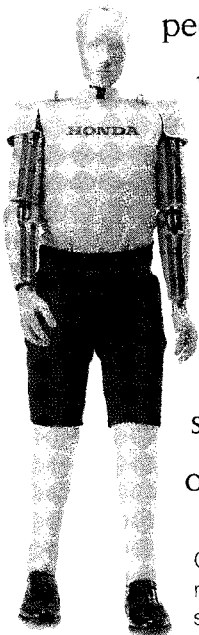


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As part of Honda's commitment to "Safety for Everyone," we are leading the industry in technology to help protect pedestrians in the event of an accident. Approximately 70,000 pedestrians a year are involved in

traffic crashes. And about 5,000 of these end in fatalities. In our efforts to help reduce injuries, especially to the head, Honda created POLAR II, a unique pedestrian test dummy with sensors that help analyze the types of injuries that could be sustained



Created by Honda engineers, POLAR II is the most advanced pedestrian test dummy, and simulates the kinematics of the human body.

in an accident. Our pioneering research has led to the development of a number of pedestrian-protection features, including injury-reducing designs that minimize direct contact with the most rigid part of the vehicle. More than 2 million U.S. Honda and Acura vehicles on the road today have this equipment. Honda is firmly committed to advancing our safety technologies, with our goal of "Safety for Everyone" leading the way.



POLAR II has instruments that measure the level of injury throughout the body, including the head, neck, chest, abdomen and legs.

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Based on Traffic Safety Facts 2003 from NHTSA. 2005 Accord EX Sedan shown. ©2005 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

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tion authorizing President Bush to go to war against Iraq. Pelosi broke with her boss and rallied a majority of her anti-war colleagues behind an amendment requiring the administration to seek congressional authorization for the use of force. The amendment failed, but Pelosi was popular enough that when Gephardt retired, soon afterward, she was virtually unchallenged for his job.

Since the two assumed the leadership things have not gotten better for their party, and some observers blame them, not just Republican strength. "The problems Democrats face communicating with people start at the top," says Charlie Cook, the political handicapper and author of *The Cook Political Report*. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the pair's rebuttal to Bush's State of the Union speech in January, for which they were widely panned as ineffectual. Cook dubbed them a "vapid response team" and added, "The Democratic Party is taking so many hits for being the party of the trial lawyers yet seems unable to make a convincing case of its own."

Though Pelosi and Reid appear placidly confident that the Democrats will soon win back Congress, neither seems able to say quite how that will happen. Rather, they profess faith that if they simply counter Republican initiatives, voters will plainly see that the Democrats should be returned to power. "I'm not much into role-playing," Reid replied when I asked about his ability to lead a comeback. "I'll just do my job here and see what happens." Pelosi bases her belief in the inevitability of a Republican downfall on historical precedent: in the midterm elections of a president's sixth year (which Bush reaches next year) his party typically loses congressional seats. "There is an average loss of twenty-eight or twenty-nine [House] seats for the sitting president's party," she points out. "We don't go by history, but the fact is that it is in our favor." If that pattern holds true in 2006, the loss will be more than enough to put the Democrats in the majority and make Pelosi the first-ever female speaker.

But analysts consider it a virtual

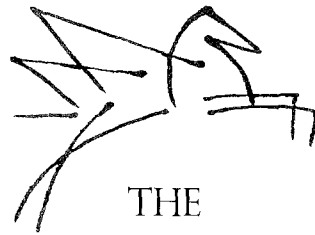
certainty that the pattern *won't* hold true. As the country has grown more polarized, the number of competitive seats has plummeted, and with it a minority party's chance of sparking a sudden turnaround. The National Committee for an Effective Congress, which analyzes electoral data, reports that the number of close races dropped from 117 in 1994 to just thirty-four last November. In fact, the most recent president to reach a sixth year—Bill Clinton—saw his party *gain* seats.

Pelosi and Reid's laissez-faire attitude doesn't square with the fact that voters not only re-elected a Republican president but also boosted Republican majorities in Congress. Absent a GOP scandal or an economic collapse of epic proportions, the Democrats will have to draw the electoral equivalent of a straight flush to have any shot at breaking out of minority status in 2006. Most experts believe that they won't seriously contend for the House until 2012 at the earliest.

This grim scenario makes the Democrats' choice of leaders somewhat puzzling. Reid and Pelosi both apprenticed as whip, a job that requires corraling and cajoling fellow congressmen to support the party line. But circumstances now demand Democratic leaders who can win *outside* Congress. That will require abandoning the party line for a new course, which Reid and Pelosi are *unequipped to do*. Many members of Congress say privately that the real energy and tactical smarts in the party are concentrated in two recent arrivals, Representative Rahm Emanuel, of Illinois, and Senator Charles Schumer, of New York—both of them rising in party ranks and estimation.

Pelosi and Reid embody the travails of the Democratic Party in Congress as it continues the difficult transition to effective minority status after decades in power. When one has been in power for a long time, the object is simply to stay put, and trusting in patience and historical inevitability makes sense. Pelosi and Reid were trained as curators. Their party needs revolutionaries. ■

Joshua Green is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*.



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DEMOCRATIC DOMINOES

What would happen if democracy really did sweep through the Middle East? DANIEL BYMAN predicts

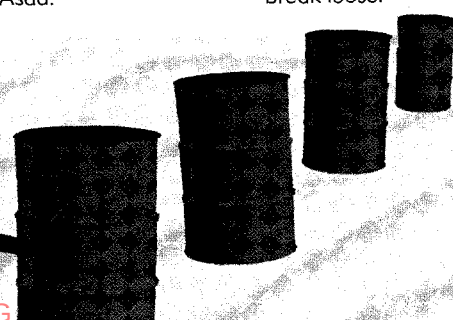
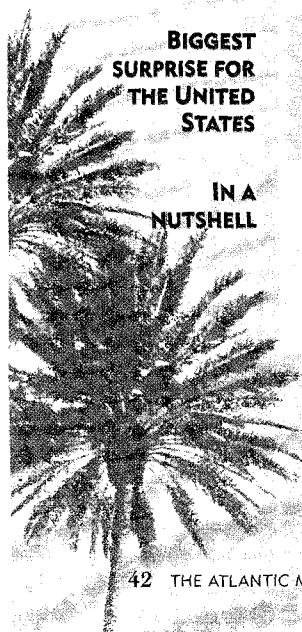
	IRAN	SYRIA	LEBANON
REGIME TYPE TODAY	Theocratic autocracy with thin democratic veneer.	Secular socialist tyranny, led by a minority sect of Islam—the Alawis.	Syrian puppet government masquerading as constitutional democracy.
PROBABLE NATURE OF A FREELY ELECTED REGIME	Many-hued, with a nationalistic bent and generally muted religiosity.	Combination of nationalists and Islamists, united only in their hostility to the United States and their opposition to the old regime.	Scrupulously inclusionist—as mandated by the constitution—but disproportionately favoring Sunni and Maronite Christian minorities.
RISK OF CIVIL STRIFE IN A NEW REGIME	LOW. Iran's population is not polarized. Disputes are political, not ethnic or religious. But the revolutionary establishment might foment unrest.	HIGH. Sunni Islamists might seek revenge on Alawis for years of exclusion; Alawis might fight to preserve their power.	HIGH. The new government would be weak, and a host of countries, particularly Syria, might meddle. Much would depend on whether Hizbollah—the formidable Lebanese Shiite terrorist group—could be mollified.
PROSPECTS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH	BETTER. A new government would be likely to make the economy a priority, and might try to root out corruption and patronage tied to the old regime.	WORSE. The regime's likely incoherence, along with its Islamist and nationalistic tendencies, would not augur well for reform.	DECENT, if civil strife could be averted.
A FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL MIGHT GROW UP TO ...	... run for parliament.	... live a life of poverty.	... start her own business.
NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES	POSITIVE, but touchy. Diplomatic relations, trade, and other contact would resume, but Iran would still seek to be the dominant player in the region, and would bristle if it perceived the United States as heavy-handed.	HOSTILE. Nationalistic and Islamist Syrians would still oppose U.S. interests in the region. Whether their opposition would be more muted or more flagrant than that of the current regime is an open question.	CONFLICTED. Many Lebanese groups would favor a normal relationship, but the most powerful faction—Hizbollah—might make rebuffing the United States, particularly on security issues, a price for its cooperation.
BIGGEST SURPRISE FOR THE UNITED STATES	A peaceful and democratic Iran would still want a nuke (though the right carrots might dissuade it from pursuing one).	The new regime would still facilitate terrorism against Israel.	A speaker of the parliament from Hizbollah.

IN A NUTSHELL

A triumph for Iran, the region, and the United States.

Though Syria would be just as poor, and less stable, neither the Syrians nor the Americans could do much worse than Bashar al-Asad.

Syria's departure would be welcome, but that would be only the first step. The Pax Syriana prevented war; without it all hell might break loose.



PALESTINE

Defies categorization: an elected leader presides over something that is not a state, and has little control over multiple well-armed factions.

Secular and prone to squabbles, with a limited role for Islamists if they rejected violence.

HIGH. Fatah and affiliated groups are not disciplined organizations, and local warlords exercise considerable control. Hamas—the terrorist group that seeks an Islamic state in Palestine—could again embrace violence if it felt its power slipping.

BETTER. (Couldn't possibly be worse.)

... subsist on money from UN relief agencies and other NGOs.

AMBIVALENT. The United States would still be resented as Israel's greatest ally, and denounced in public. Privately, though, Palestinian leaders would recognize U.S. financial support and pressure on Israel as necessary for the success of any peace deal.

Having been sold out by every Arab country over the years, the Palestinians would have little love for their "Arab brothers."

Many, many things could go wrong. But the status quo is abysmal, and other alternatives to democracy are worse.

Daniel Byman is an assistant professor in Georgetown University's Security Studies Program, and a senior fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, at the Brookings Institution. His latest book, Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism, will be released in July.

EGYPT

Stolid autocracy, led by Hosni Mubarak.



Diverse, uneasy, and quite possibly ineffectual—an amalgam of Islamists, secular progressives, and those loyal to the old regime (whose entrenched patronage networks ensure survival).

LOW. Egypt has a strong national identity and no major ethnic divides. Most mainstream Islamists reject violence against the Coptic Christian minority. Egyptian Islamists tend to be more pragmatic than their counterparts in other countries.

WORSE. Foreign investment would be low until the government proved itself, and constituents' demands for "fair" economic policies would make tough reforms difficult.

... have a daughter who had a real chance.

BLUSTERY. Hostile rhetoric would increase (the Islamists have long harangued against U.S. policy and Western values); the new government's desire for the \$2 billion in aid the United States provides each year would temper but not eliminate ill will.

Islamists in government can, in fact, cooperate with the United States.

A free, peaceful, and prosperous future is possible, but don't count on it. Economic stagnation would be more likely than growth, and Islamists might prove false democrats if they feared losing power.

SAUDI ARABIA

Sclerotic monarchy, led by the teeming and often dysfunctional al-Saud family.

Sunni Islamist, puritanical, and very, very scary. Openly hostile to Shiite-led regimes in Iraq and Iran.

MEDIUM. Discrimination against the Shiites might increase, which might in turn prompt demonstrations and violence.

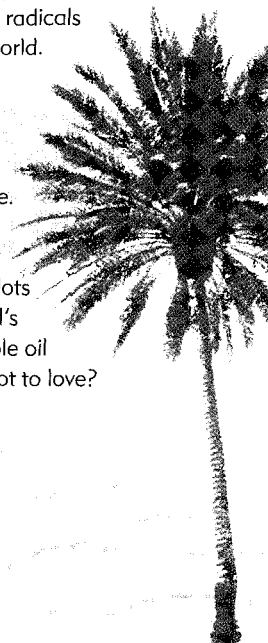
WORSE. The state would still dominate the economy, and corruption would remain rife. To the world's consternation, the new government might refuse to stabilize oil prices, leading to frequent spikes.

... have ten lovely children.

HOSTILE. At best Washington and Riyadh would coexist, not cooperate. Diplomatic relations could end. Riyadh might support anti-U.S. *jihadis* and Sunni radicals throughout the world.

The al-Sauds really were a modernizing force.

Anti-Western zealots running the world's most indispensable oil state ... what's not to love?



Primary Sources

Grade inflation at Cornell; what the Saudis are teaching Muslims in America; what the UN does better than the United States

THE MILITARY

Coalition of the Generous

Late last year the Congressional Research Service set out to quantify international contributions to the rebuilding of Iraq, and found that some of the biggest checks have been written, or at least promised, by Iraq's neighbors. Kuwait has donated \$1.5 billion to the reconstruction effort, making it second only to Japan among nations other than the United States; and Saudi Arabia, with pledges and loans of around \$1 billion, matches the United Kingdom for the third largest contribution. Significant aid has also flowed in from Qatar, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. As for the European countries that opposed the war, Germany has donated \$155 million—whereas the French have put up only \$10.7 million, barely edging out the \$10 million donation from ... Iran.

—“Post-War Iraq: A Table and Chronology of Foreign Contributions,” J. M. Sharp, Congressional Research Service

THE NATION

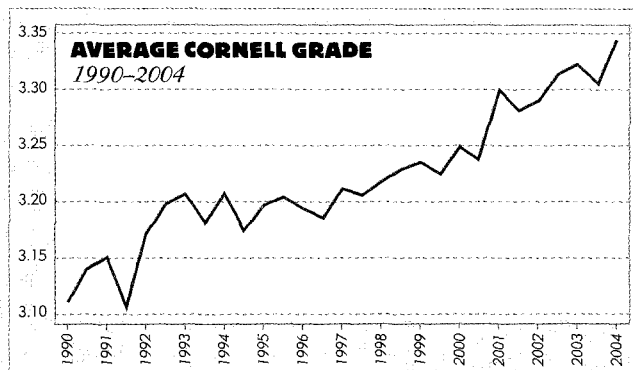
Sexual Pension?

George W. Bush might have better luck getting the American people to support changes in Social Security if he cast his argument in different terms—for instance, by arguing that Social Security is partly responsible for the nation's birth dearth, as two new studies from the National Bureau of Economic

Research imply. The first study reviewed data from fifty-seven countries, and found that pay-as-you-go pension systems like Social Security depress fertility—and also saving and investment in human capital more generally—because they fix old-age income at a set amount, making it independent of both one's personal contributions and the contributions of one's children. The second study compared fertility rates

over the past half century in America and Europe; it found that they have been consistently lower in Europe (and the gap is widening), and suggested that Europe's much larger system of government-funded pensions accounts for up to 60 percent of the difference. Given that Europe's drop in fertility rates poses a far greater demographic and economic challenge than that in the United States, a pension-privatization plan might meet with a warmer reception on the other side of the Atlantic.

—“Social Security, Demographic Trends, and Economic Growth: Theory and Evidence From the International Experience,” I. Ehrlich and J. Kim, NBER; “Fertility and Social Security,” M. Boldrin et al., NBER



SOCIETY

Gut Check

In 1997 Cornell University began posting median grades for every course online, so that students could put their own grades in a larger perspective. (After all, an A in “Physics for Poets” is presumably less impressive than an A in “Physics for Physicists.”) The university's theory—which reveals an astonishing naiveté about human nature—was that this would encourage students to choose more-challenging courses. Instead, according to a paper published early this year by two Cornell economists, the policy provided a case study in how to pump up GPAs. Armed with accurate, official grading information, students used it to pick easy classes and avoid difficult ones: once-hidden guts were now readily identified, enrollment in them ballooned, and since the new policy was instituted the overall rate of grade inflation—already a subject of concern at Cornell, as in the academic world in general—has more than doubled.

—“Quest for Knowledge and Pursuit of Grades: Grade Information and Inflation at an Ivy League School,” Talia Bar and Asaf Zussman, Cornell University

Steal From Gay Muslims

Saudi Arabia has long been generous to Muslims in America. Not only does the House of Saud supply funding to build mosques in the United States, but it provides a wealth of religious literature to stock those mosques' libraries and study halls. What does that literature say? Representatives from the human-rights organization Freedom House spent a year sampling Saudi-supplied literature at mosques in major American cities, and encountered a variety of troubling texts. Among other things, Muslims are urged to avoid befriending Jews and Christians; to treat their time in the United States as they would a trip behind enemy lines; to revile Sufism, Shia, and other non-Wahhabi variants of Islam; to rob and inflict violence on Muslims who engage in homosexual acts; and to kill Muslims who convert to other faiths. The usual anti-Semitic slurs are recycled (*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, for instance, is treated as a historical document in Saudi-donated textbooks), and many of the publications urge that women be required to wear veils and banned from various jobs. The report allows that most of these documents were supplied in the 1980s and 1990s, and that the government of Saudi Arabia claims to be “updating” its books and study materials. But the researchers add that the titles in question remain “widespread and plentiful” in the United States, and continue to be used in the education of Muslims here.

—“Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques,” Freedom House

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PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS*of the UN and the United States*

Country & dates	Mission leader	Peak troops	RAND assessment
West Germany, 1945–1952	US/UK/Fr	1.6 million	"very successful"
Japan, 1945–1952	US	350,000	"very successful"
Congo, 1960–1964	UN	19,828	"partially successful"
Namibia, 1989–1990	UN	4,493	"successful"
Cambodia, 1991–1993	UN	15,991	"partially successful"
El Salvador, 1991–1996	UN	4,948	"successful"
Somalia, 1992–1994	UN/US	28,000	"not successful"
Mozambique, 1992–1994	UN	6,576	"mostly successful"
Haiti, 1994–1996	UN/US	21,000	"initially successful, then not"
Eastern Slavonia, 1995–1998	UN	8,248	"successful"
Bosnia, 1995–present	US/NATO/EU	20,000	"mixed success"
Sierra Leone, 1998–present	UN/UK	15,255	"initially unsuccessful, then improved"
East Timor, 1999–present	UN/Australia	8,084	"successful"
Kosovo, 1999–present	US/UN/NATO/EU	15,000	"mostly successful"
Afghanistan, 2001–present	US/UN/NATO	20,000	"too soon to tell"
Iraq, 2003–present	US	175,000	"too soon to tell"

Good News for Kofi

Following up on a widely read 2003 report on U.S. nation-building efforts, the RAND Corporation has released a study of United Nations peacekeeping missions. It concludes that in many cases the UN is better suited than the United States to lead stability-building operations. The UN has a low cost structure, a high success rate, and, perhaps most important, "the greatest degree of international legitimacy" among possible peacekeepers. It has also done a better job of learning from the past than the United States—which, though it had successful experiences with nation-building in the 1990s (in Bosnia, Kosovo, and to a lesser degree Haiti), failed to apply their lessons in Afghanistan and Iraq. Whereas UN operations are typically led by veterans of earlier missions, the authors argue, the United States "tends to staff each new operation as if it were its first and destined to be its last." And in Iraq, they write, American civil administrators were "late to arrive, of mixed competence, and not available in adequate numbers." The study also faults America for relying on "grandiloquent" rhetoric rather than careful diplomacy to build support for its missions. Of course, UN operations are not without weaknesses; they tend to be undermanned and underfunded, with military personnel of uneven quality, whereas U.S. missions benefit from greater access to donors and funds. In the end the UN may have a better success rate in part because the operations it undertakes are less demanding than those led by the United States. UN missions are limited to countries where no "forced entry" is required, the conflicting parties cooperate with the peacekeepers to some degree, and the number of troops needed is no greater than 20,000. East Timor and Mozambique, in other words—not Iraq.

—"The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq," J. Dobbins et al., RAND

SCIENCE & NATURE

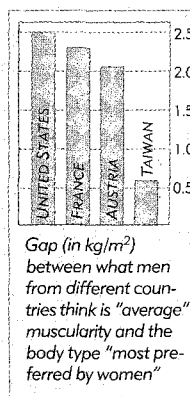
The Black Death Versus HIV

Did one famous plague help protect Europe against another? So suggests a study published in the *Journal of Medical Genetics*, which reports that about 10 percent of Europe's present-day population seems to be resistant to HIV—a significantly higher proportion than on other continents. Researchers have traced this immunity to a genetic mutation that seems to have appeared some 2,500 years ago, and that protects white blood cells against penetration by HIV. In the mid fourteenth century, when the first outbreak of the Black Death occurred, the mutation showed up in only one of about 20,000 Europeans. From that point through the seventeenth century, however, its prevalence increased, in tandem with repeated outbreaks of the plague. The researchers suggest that the mutation protected against the disease, which culled the population of people who lacked it. This would explain why HIV resistance is more common in Scandinavia and Russia (16 percent of Russians, for example, have the mutation) than in southern Europe (in Sardinia only four percent do): the plague lingered in northern Europe far longer than in the Mediterranean region. The theory that an anti-viral mutation was selected for during the era of the Black Death calls into question the long-held notion that the plague was caused by rat-carried bacteria.

—"Reappraisal of the Historical Selective Pressures for the CCR5- Δ 32 Mutation," S. R. Duncan et al., *Journal of Medical Genetics*

The Measure of Men

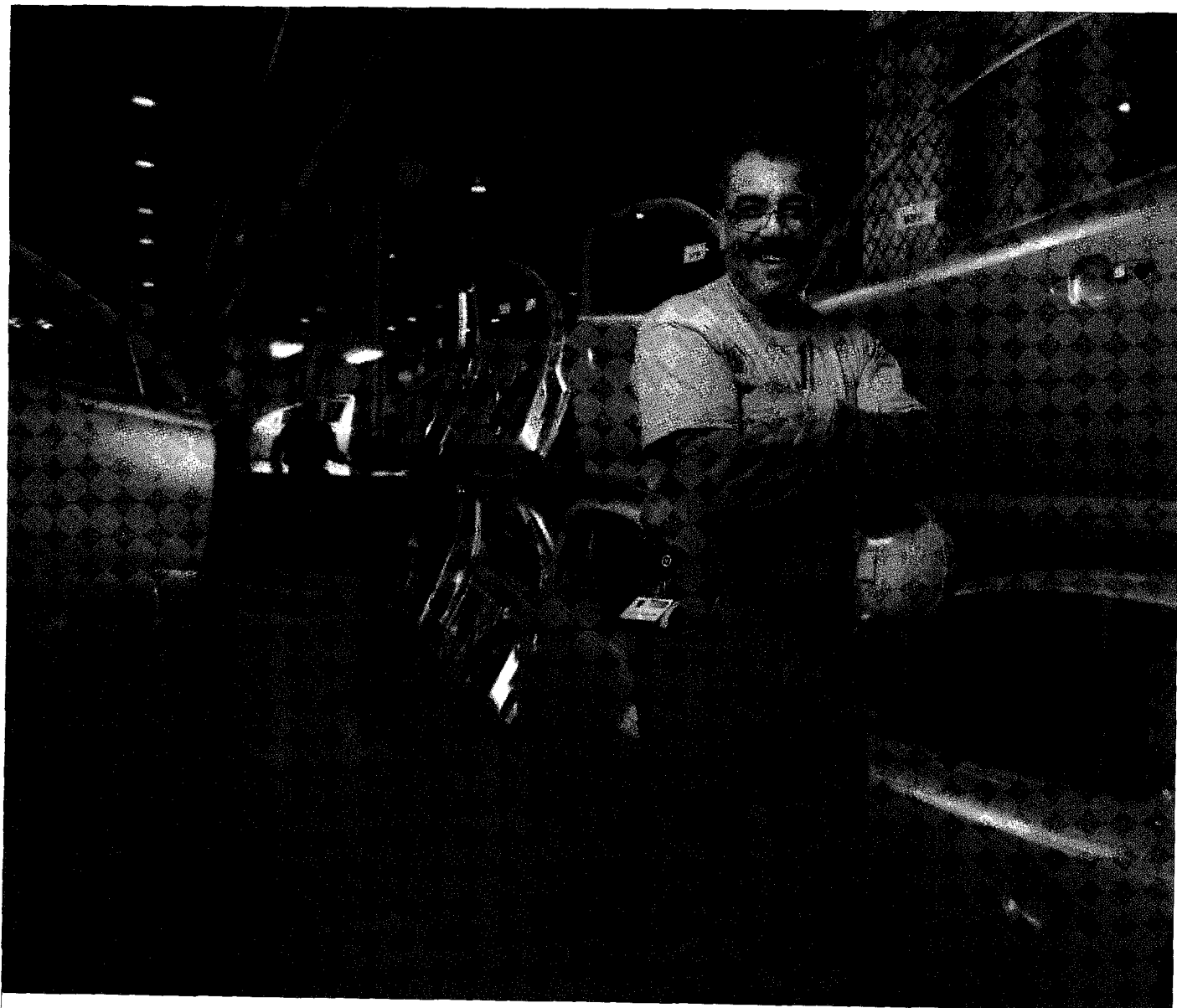
Asian men are typically shorter and slighter than their Western counterparts. But a recent study of Taiwanese men found that they are more comfortable with their appearance than men in Western countries, who, when asked to pick the male body type they think women find most attractive, tend to select one that is about twenty pounds more muscled-up than they perceive their own to be. Taiwanese men thought that women would prefer a male form that was only ten pounds more muscular than they estimated their own to be. The study also noted that Taiwanese magazine advertisements rarely portray undressed or semi-dressed Asian men, whereas ads in U.S. magazines frequently show undressed or semi-dressed Western men—which could help account for why Taiwanese appear less preoccupied than Westerners with male body image. The researchers suggest that these findings explain why "muscle dysmorphia" (a condition in which



people perceive themselves as smaller than they actually are) and anabolic-steroid abuse are far less common in East Asia than in the United States and Europe.

—"Male Body Image in Taiwan Versus the West: Yanggang Zhiqi Meets the Adonis Complex," C. F. Yang et al., *American Journal of Psychiatry*

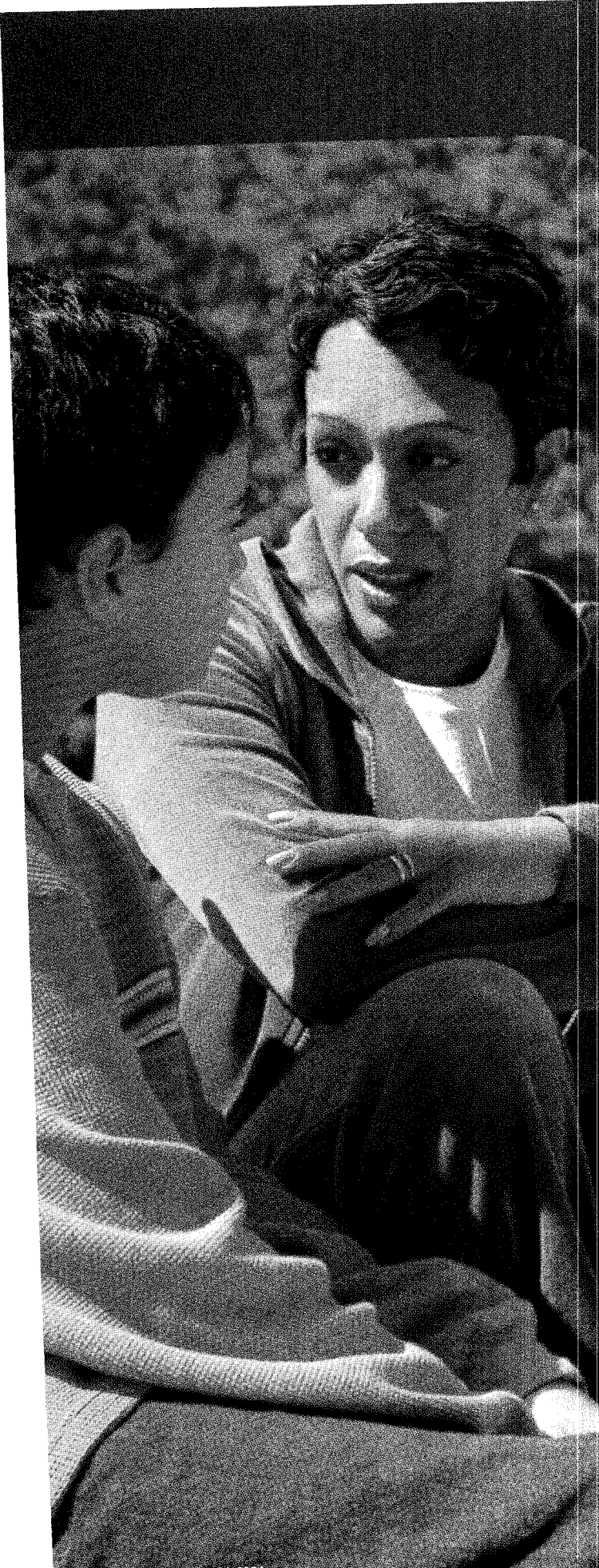
Compiled by Ross Douthat, Terrence Henry, and Marshall Poe. For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200506/primarysources



I'm one in a million. Everyday nearly 1,000,000 Americans earn their living helping GM build and sell cars in the United States. I'm one of them. My name is James Klemann and I'm a tool maker at the GM stamping plant in Lordstown, Ohio. To me and my family, it's the most important job in the country.

James A. Klemann

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HOW WE WOULD FIGHT CHINA

The Middle East is just a blip. The American military contest with China in the Pacific will define the twenty-first century. And China will be a more formidable adversary than Russia ever was

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

.....

For some time now no navy or air force has posed a threat to the United States. Our only competition has been armies, whether conventional forces or guerrilla insurgencies. This will soon change. The Chinese navy is poised to push out into the Pacific—and when it does, it will very quickly encounter a U.S. Navy and Air Force unwilling to budge from the coastal shelf of the Asian mainland. It's not hard to imagine the result: a replay of the decades-long Cold War, with a center of gravity not in the heart of Europe but, rather, among Pacific atolls that were last in the news when the Marines stormed them in World War II. In the coming decades China will play an asymmetric back-and-forth game with us in the Pacific, taking advantage not only of its vast coastline but also of its rear base—stretching far back into Central Asia—from which it may eventually be able to lob missiles accurately at moving ships in the Pacific.

In any naval encounter China will have distinct advantages over the United States, even if it lags in technological military prowess. It has the benefit, for one thing, of sheer proximity. Its military is an avid student of the competition, and a fast learner. It has growing increments of “soft” power that demonstrate a particular gift for adaptation. While stateless terrorists fill security vacuums, the Chinese fill economic ones. All over the globe, in such disparate places as the troubled Pacific Island states of Oceania, the Panama Canal zone, and out-of-the-way African nations, the Chinese are becoming masters of indirect influence—by establishing business communities and diplomatic outposts, by negotiating construction and trade agreements. Pulsing with consumer and martial energy, and boasting a peasantry that, unlike others in history, is overwhelmingly literate, China constitutes the principal conventional threat to America's liberal imperium.

How should the United States prepare to respond to challenges in the Pacific? To understand the dynamics of this second Cold War—



which will link China and the United States in a future that may stretch over several generations—it is essential to understand certain things about the first Cold War, and about the current predicament of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the institution set up to fight that conflict. This is a story about military strategy and tactics, with some counterintuitive twists and turns.

The first thing to understand is that the alliance system of the latter half of the twentieth century is dead. Warfare by committee, as practiced by NATO, has simply become too cumbersome in an age that requires light and lethal strikes. During the fighting in Kosovo in 1999 (a limited air campaign against a toothless enemy during a time of Euro-American harmony; a campaign, in other words, that should have been easy to prosecute) dramatic fissures appeared in the then-nineteen-member NATO alliance. The organization's end effectively came with the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, in the aftermath of which, despite talk of a broad-based coalition, European militaries have usually done little more than patrol and move into areas already pacified by U.S. soldiers and Marines—a job more suggestive of the United Nations. NATO today is a medium for the expansion of bilateral training missions between the United States and formerly communist countries and republics: the Marines in Bulgaria and Romania, the Navy in Albania, the Army in Poland and the Czech Republic, Special Operations Forces in Georgia—the list goes on and on. Much of NATO has become a farm system for the major-league U.S. military.

The second thing to understand is that the functional substitute for a NATO of the Pacific already exists, and is indeed up and running. It is the U.S. Pacific Command, known as PACOM. Unencumbered by a diplomatic bureaucracy, PACOM is a large but nimble construct, and its leaders understand what many in the media and the policy community do not: that the center of

Robert D. Kaplan is an Atlantic correspondent and the author of Imperial Grunts: The American Military on the Ground, forthcoming in September from Random House—the first of several books he is writing about the armed forces.

gravity of American strategic concern is already the Pacific, not the Middle East. PACOM will soon be a household name, as CENTCOM (the U.S. Central Command) has been in the current epoch of Middle Eastern conflict—an epoch that will start to wind down, as far as the U.S. military is concerned, during the second Bush administration.

The third thing to understand is that, ironically, the vitality of NATO itself, the Atlantic alliance, could be revived by the Cold War in the Pacific—and indeed the re-emergence of NATO as an indispensable war-fighting instrument should be America's unswerving aim. In its posture toward China the United States will look to Europe and NATO, whose help it will need as a strategic counterweight and, by the way, as a force to patrol seas more distant than the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic. That is why NATO's current commander, Marine General James L. Jones, emphasizes that NATO's future lies in amphibious, expeditionary warfare.

Let me describe our military organization in the Pacific—an area through which I have traveled extensively during the past three years. PACOM has always been the largest, most venerable, and most interesting of the U.S. military's area commands. (Its roots go back to the U.S. Pacific Army of the Philippines War, 1899–1902.) Its domain stretches from East Africa to beyond the International Date Line and includes the entire Pacific Rim, encompassing half the world's surface and more than half of its economy. The world's six largest militaries, two of which (America's and China's) are the most rapidly modernizing, all operate within PACOM's sphere of control. PACOM has—in addition to its many warships and submarines—far more dedicated troops than CENTCOM. Even though the military's area commands do not *own* troops today in the way they used to, these statistics matter, because they demonstrate that the United States has chosen to locate the bulk of its forces in the Pacific, not in the Middle East. CENTCOM fights wars with troops essentially borrowed from PACOM.

Quietly in recent years, by negotiating bilateral security agreements with countries that have few such arrangements with one another, the U.S. military has formed a Pacific military alliance of sorts at PACOM headquarters, in Honolulu. This is where the truly interesting meetings are being held today, rather than in Ditchley or Davos. The attendees at those meetings, who often travel on PACOM's dime, are military officers from such places as Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines.

Otto von Bismarck, the father of the Second Reich in continental Europe, would recognize the emerging Pacific system. In 2002 the German commentator Josef Joffe appreciated this in a remarkably perceptive article in *The National Interest*, in which he argued that in terms of political alliances, the United States has come to resemble Bismarck's Prussia. Britain, Russia, and Austria needed

Prussia more than they needed one another, Joffe wrote, thus making them “spokes” to Berlin's “hub”; the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan exposed a world in which America can forge different coalitions for different crises. The world's other powers, he said, now need the United States more than they need one another.

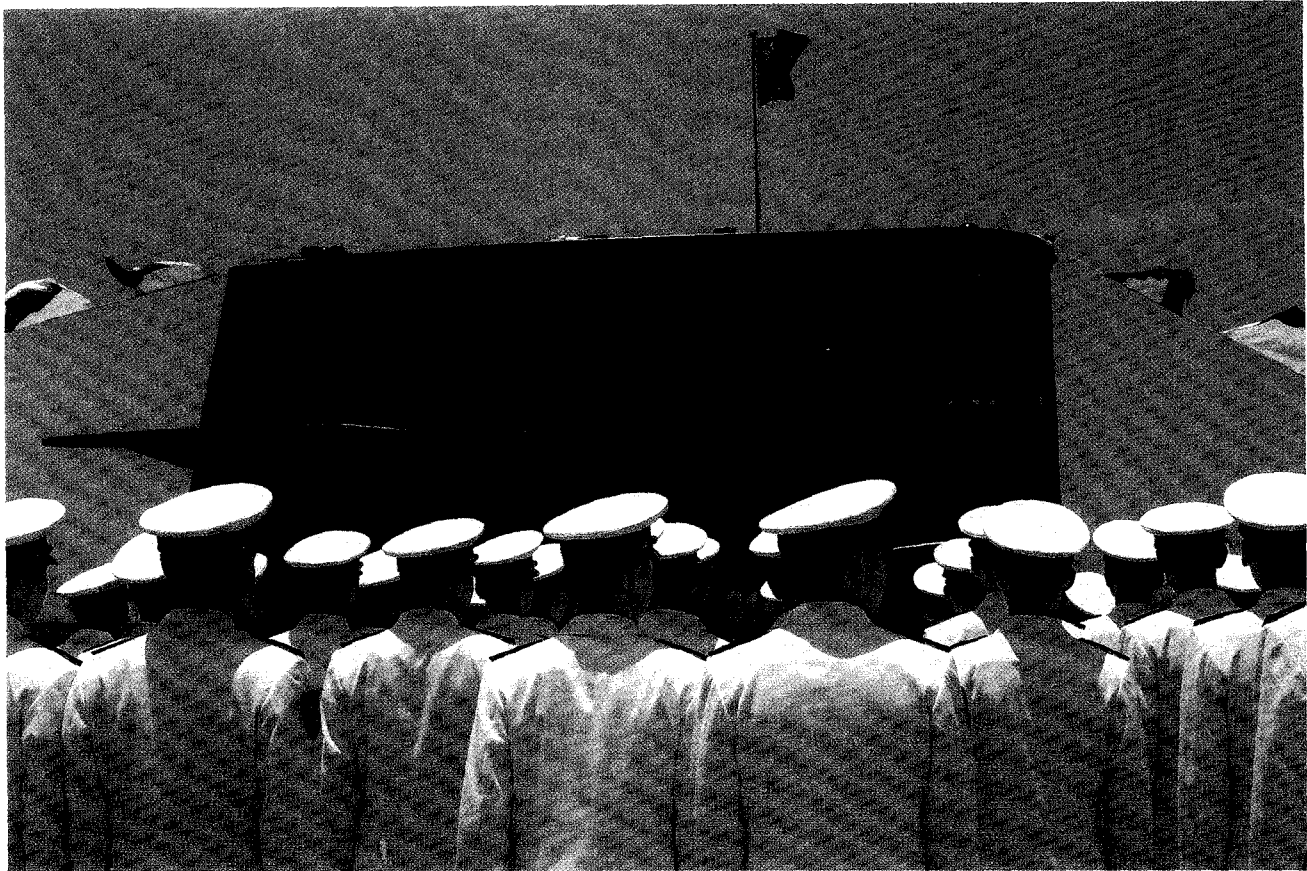
Unfortunately, the United States did not immediately capitalize on this new power arrangement, because President George W. Bush lacked the nuance and attendant self-restraint of Bismarck, who understood that such a system could endure only so long as one didn't overwhelm it. The Bush administration did just that, of course, in the buildup to the invasion of Iraq, which led France, Germany, Russia, and China, along with a host of lesser powers such as Turkey, Mexico, and Chile, to unite against us.

In the Pacific, however, a Bismarckian arrangement still prospers, helped along by the pragmatism of our Hawaii-based military officers, five time zones removed from the ideological hothouse of Washington, D.C. In fact, PACOM represents a much purer version of Bismarck's imperial superstructure *than anything the Bush administration created prior to invading Iraq*. As Henry Kissinger writes in *Diplomacy* (1994), Bismarck forged alliances in all directions from a point of seeming isolation, without the constraints of ideology. He brought peace and prosperity to Central Europe by recognizing that when power relationships are correctly calibrated, wars tend to be avoided.

The Chinese are investing in both diesel-powered and nuclear-powered submarines—a clear signal that they intend not only to protect their coasts but also to expand their influence far out into the Pacific.

Only a similarly pragmatic approach will allow us to accommodate China's inevitable re-emergence as a great power. The alternative will be to turn the earth of the twenty-first century into a battlefield. Whenever great powers have emerged or re-emerged on the scene (Germany and Japan in the early decades of the twentieth century, to cite two recent examples), they have tended to be particularly assertive—and therefore have thrown international affairs into violent turmoil. China will be no exception. Today the Chinese are investing in both diesel-powered and nuclear-powered submarines—a clear signal that they intend not only to protect their coastal shelves but also to expand their sphere of influence far out into the Pacific and beyond.

This is wholly legitimate. China's rulers may not be dem-



ocrats in the literal sense, but they are seeking a liberated First World lifestyle for many of their 1.3 billion people—and doing so requires that they safeguard sea-lanes for the transport of energy resources from the Middle East and elsewhere. Naturally, they do not trust the United States and India to do this for them. Given the stakes, and given what history teaches us about the conflicts that emerge when great powers all pursue legitimate interests, the result is likely to be the defining military conflict of the twenty-first century: if not a big war with China, then a series of Cold War-style standoffs that stretch out over years and decades. And this will occur mostly within PACOM's area of responsibility.

To do their job well, military officers must approach power in the most cautious, mechanical, and utilitarian way possible, assessing and reassessing regional balances of power while leaving the values side of the political equation to the civilian leadership. This makes military officers, of all government professionals, the least prone to be led astray by the raptures of liberal internationalism and neo-conservative interventionism.

The history of World War II shows the importance of this approach. In the 1930s the U.S. military, nervous about the growing strength of Germany and Japan, rightly lobbied for building up our forces. But by 1940 and 1941 the military (not unlike the German general staff a few years earlier) was presciently warning of the dangers of a two-front war; and by late summer of 1944 it should have been

thinking less about defeating Germany and more about containing the Soviet Union. Today Air Force and Navy officers worry about a Taiwanese declaration of independence, because such a move would lead the United States into fighting a war with China that might not be in our national interest. Indonesia is another example: whatever the human-rights failures of the Indonesian military, PACOM assumes, correctly, that a policy of non-engagement would only open the door to Chinese-Indonesian military cooperation in a region that represents the future of world terrorism. (The U.S. military's response to the Asian tsunami was, of course, a humanitarian effort; but PACOM strategists had to have recognized that a vigorous response would gain political support for the military-basing rights that will form part of our deterrence strategy against China.) Or consider Korea: some Pacific-based officers take a reunified Korean peninsula for granted, and their main concern is whether the country will be "Finlandized" by China or will be secure within an American-Japanese sphere of influence.

PACOM's immersion in Asian power dynamics gives it unusual diplomatic weight, and consequently more leverage in Washington. And PACOM will not be nearly as constrained as CENTCOM by Washington-based domestic politics. Our actions in the Pacific will not be swayed by the equivalent of the Israel lobby; Protestant evangelicals will care less about the Pacific Rim than about the fate of the Holy Land. And because of the vast economic consequences of misjudging the power balance in East Asia, American business and mili-

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We see a standing ovation.

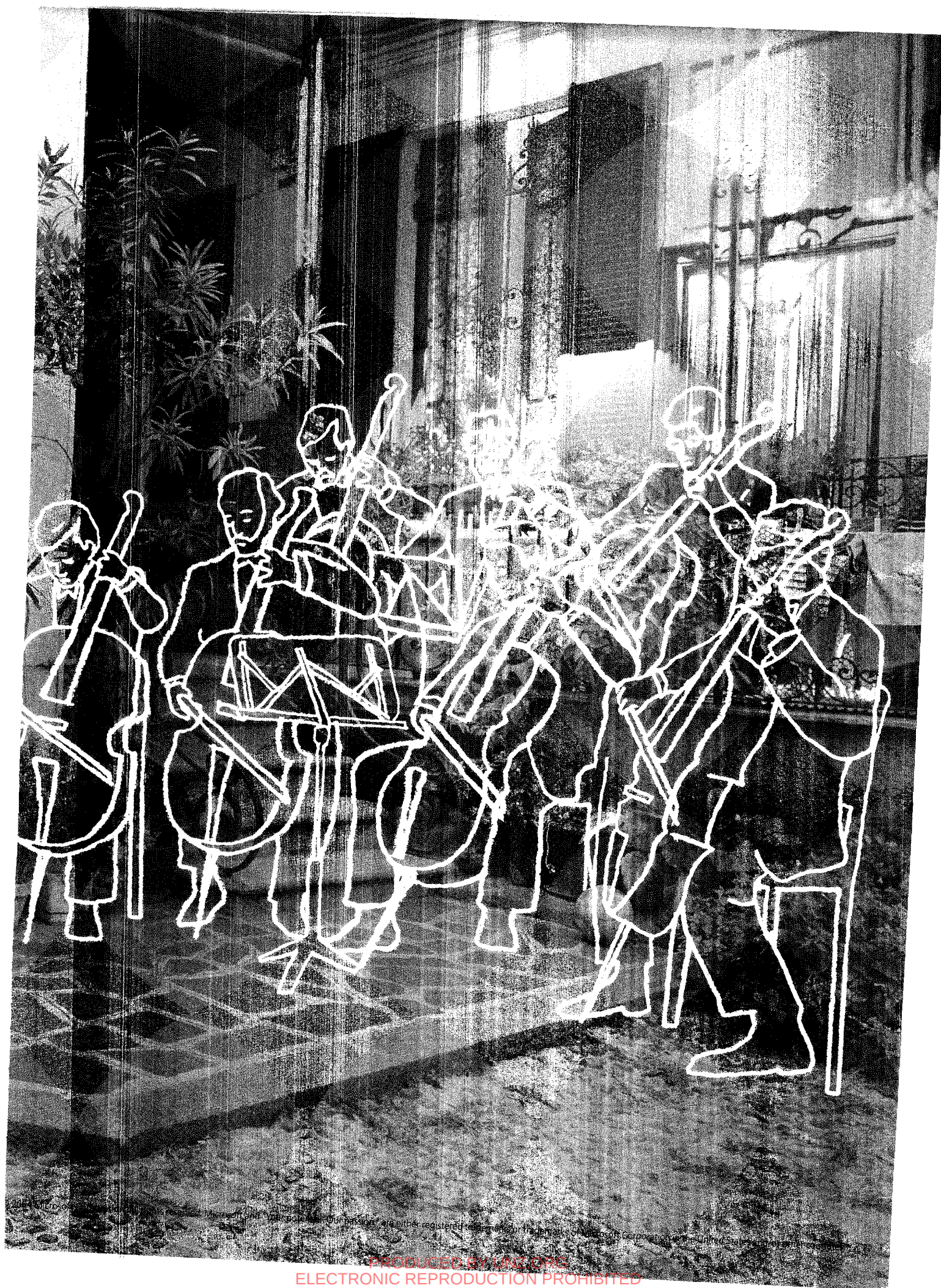
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tary interests are likely to run in tandem toward a classically conservative policy of deterring China without needlessly provoking it, thereby amplifying PACOM's authority. Our stance toward China and the Pacific, in other words, comes with a built-in stability—and this, in turn, underscores the notion of a new Cold War that is sustainable over the very long haul. Moreover, the complexity of the many political and military relationships managed by PACOM will give the command considerably greater influence than that currently exercised by CENTCOM—which, as a few military experts have disparagingly put it to me, deals only with a bunch of “third-rate Middle Eastern armies.”

“Getting into a war with China is easy,” says Michael Vickers, a military analyst and former Green Beret. “You can see many scenarios, not just Taiwan. But the dilemma is, How do you end a war with China?”

The relative shift in focus from the Middle East to the Pacific in coming years—idealistic rhetoric notwithstanding—will force the next American president, no matter what his or her party, to adopt a foreign policy similar to those of moderate Republican presidents such as George H. W. Bush, Gerald Ford, and Richard Nixon. The management of risk will become a governing ideology. Even if Iraq turns out to be a democratic success story, it will surely be a from-the-jaws-of-failure success that no one in the military or the diplomatic establishment will ever want to repeat—especially in Asia, where the economic repercussions of a messy military adventure would be enormous. “Getting into a war with China is easy,” says Michael Vickers, a former Green Beret who developed the weapons strategy for the Afghan resistance in the 1980s as a CIA officer and is now at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, in Washington. “You can see many scenarios, not just Taiwan—especially as the Chinese develop a submarine and missile capability throughout the Pacific. But the dilemma is, How do you end a war with China?”

Like the nations involved in World War I, and unlike the rogue states everyone has been concentrating on, the United States and China in the twenty-first century would have the capacity to keep fighting even if one or the other lost a big battle or a missile exchange. This has far-reaching implications. “Ending a war with China,” Vickers says, “may mean effecting some form of regime change, because we don’t want to leave some wounded, angry regime in place.” Another analyst, this one inside the Pentagon, told me, “Ending a war with China will force us to substantially reduce their military

capacity, thus threatening their energy sources and the Communist Party’s grip on power. The world will not be the same afterward. It’s a very dangerous road to travel on.”

The better road is for PACOM to deter China in Bismarckian fashion, from a geographic hub of comparative isolation—the Hawaiian Islands—with spokes reaching out to major allies such as Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and India. These countries, in turn, would form secondary hubs to help us manage the Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian archipelagoes, among other places, and also the Indian Ocean. The point of this arrangement would be to dissuade China so subtly that over time the rising behemoth would be drawn into the PACOM alliance system *without any large-scale conflagration*—the way NATO was ultimately able to neutralize the Soviet Union.

Whatever we say or do, China will spend more and more money on its military in the coming decades. Our only realistic goal may be to encourage it to make investments that are defensive, not offensive, in nature. Our efforts will require particular care, because China, unlike the Soviet Union of old (or Russia today, for that matter), boasts soft as well as hard power. Businesspeople love the idea of China; you don’t have to beg them to invest there, as you do in Africa and so many other places. China’s mixture of traditional authoritarianism and market economics has broad cultural appeal throughout Asia and other parts of the world. And because China is improving the material well-being of hundreds of millions of its citizens, the plight of its dissidents does not have quite the same market allure as did the plight of the Soviet Union’s Sakharovs and Sharanskys. Democracy is attractive in places where tyranny has been obvious, odious, and unsuccessful, of course, as in Ukraine and Zimbabwe. But the world is full of gray areas—Jordan and Malaysia, for example—where elements of tyranny have ensured stability and growth.

Consider Singapore. Its mixture of democracy and authoritarianism has made it unpopular with idealists in Washington, but as far as PACOM is concerned, the country is, despite its small size, one of the most popular and helpful in the Pacific. Its ethnically blind military meritocracy, its nurturing concern for the welfare of officers and enlisted men alike, and its jungle-warfare school in Brunei are second to none. With the exception of Japan, far to the north, Singapore offers the only *non-American base in the Pacific* where our nuclear carriers can be serviced. Its help in hunting down Islamic terrorists in the Indonesian archipelago has been equal or superior to the help offered elsewhere by our most dependable Western allies. One Washington-based military futurist told me, “The Sings, well—they’re just awesome in every way.”

PACOM’s objective, in the words of a Pacific-based Marine general, must be “military multilateralism on steroids.” This is not just a question of our future training with the “Sings” in Brunei, of flying test sorties with the Indian

air force, of conducting major annual exercises in Thailand, or of utilizing a soon-to-open training facility in northern Australia with the approval of our alliance partners. It's also a matter of forging interoperability with friendly Asian militaries at the platoon level, by constantly moving U.S. troops from one training deployment to another.

This would be an improvement over NATO, whose fighting fitness has been hampered by the addition of substandard former-Eastern-bloc militaries. Politics, too, favors a tilt toward the Pacific: tensions between the United States and Europe currently impede military integration, whereas our Pacific allies, notably Japan and Australia, want more military engagement with the United States, to counter the rise of the Chinese navy. This would work to our benefit. The Japanese military, although small, possesses elite niche capabilities, in special-forces and diesel-submarine warfare. And the aggressive frontier style of the Australians makes them cognitively closer to Americans than even the British.

Military multilateralism in the Pacific will nevertheless be constrained by the technical superiority of U.S. forces; it will be difficult to develop bilateral training missions with Asian militaries that are not making the same investments in high-tech equipment that we are. A classic military lesson is that technological superiority does not always confer the advantages one expects. Getting militarily so far ahead of everyone else in the world creates a particular kind of loneliness that not even the best diplomats can always alleviate, because diplomacy itself is worthless if it's not rooted in realistic assessments of comparative power.

At the moment the challenges posed by a rising China may seem slight, even nonexistent. The U.S. Navy's warships have a collective "full-load displacement" of 2.86 million tons; the rest of the world's warships combined add up to only 3.04 million tons. The Chinese navy's warships have a full-load displacement of only 263,064 tons. The United States deploys twenty-four of the world's thirty-four aircraft carriers; the Chinese deploy none (a principal reason why they couldn't mount a rescue effort after the tsunami). The statistics go on. But as Robert Work, a senior analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, points out, at the start of the twenty-seven-year Peloponnesian War, Athens had a great advantage over Sparta, which had no navy—but Sparta eventually emerged the victor.

China has committed itself to significant military spending, but its navy and air force will not be able to match ours for some decades. The Chinese are therefore not going to do us the favor of engaging in conventional air and naval battles, like those fought in the Pacific during World War II. The Battle of the Philippine Sea, in late June of 1944, and the Battle of Leyte Gulf and the Surigao Strait, in October of 1944, were the last great sea battles in American history, and are very likely to remain so. Instead the Chinese will

approach us asymmetrically, as terrorists do. In Iraq the insurgents have shown us the low end of asymmetry, with car bombs. But the Chinese are poised to show us the high end of the art. That is the threat.

There are many ways in which the Chinese could use their less advanced military to achieve a sort of political-strategic parity with us. According to one former submarine commander and naval strategist I talked to, the Chinese have been poring over every detail of our recent wars in the Balkans and the Persian Gulf, and they fully understand just how much our military power depends on naval projection—that is, on the ability of a carrier battle group to get within proximity of, say, Iraq, and fire a missile at a target deep inside the country. To adapt, the Chinese are putting their fiber-optic systems underground and moving defense capabilities deep into western China, out of naval missile range—all the while developing an offensive strategy based on missiles designed to be capable of striking that supreme icon of American wealth and power, the aircraft carrier. The effect of a single Chinese cruise missile's hitting a U.S. carrier, even if it did not sink the ship, would be politically and psychologically catastrophic, akin to al-Qaeda's attacks on the Twin Towers. China is focusing on missiles and submarines as a way to humiliate us in specific encounters. Their long-range-missile program should deeply concern U.S. policymakers.

With an advanced missile program the Chinese could fire hundreds of missiles at Taiwan before we could get to the island to defend it. Such a capability, combined with a new fleet of submarines (soon to be a greater undersea force than ours, in size if not in quality), might well be enough for the Chinese to coerce other countries into denying port access to U.S. ships. Most of China's seventy current submarines are past-their-prime diesels of Russian design; but these vessels could be used to create mobile minefields in the South China, East China, and Yellow Seas, where, as the *Wall Street Journal* reporter David Lague has written, "uneven depths, high levels of background noise, strong currents and shifting thermal layers" would make detecting the submarines very difficult. Add to this the seventeen new stealthy diesel submarines and three nuclear ones that the Chinese navy will deploy by the end of the decade, and one can imagine that China could launch an embarrassing strike against us, or against one of our Asian allies. Then there is the whole field of ambiguous coercion—for example, a series of non-attributable cyberattacks on Taiwan's electrical-power grids, designed to gradually demoralize the population. This isn't science fiction; the Chinese have invested significantly in cyberwarfare training and technology. Just because the Chinese are not themselves democratic doesn't mean they are not expert in manipulating the psychology of a democratic electorate.

What we can probably expect from China in the near future is specific demonstrations of strength—like its successful forcing down of a U.S. Navy EP-3E surveillance plane in



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the spring of 2001. Such tactics may represent the trend of twenty-first-century warfare better than anything now happening in Iraq—and China will have no shortage of opportunities in this arena. During one of our biennial Rim of the Pacific naval exercises the Chinese could sneak a sub under a carrier battle group and then surface it. They could deploy a moving target at sea and then hit it with a submarine- or land-based missile, demonstrating their ability to threaten not only carriers but also destroyers, frigates, and cruisers. (Think about the political effects of the terrorist attack on the USS *Cole*, a guided-missile destroyer, off the coast of Yemen in 2000—and then think about a future in which hitting such ships will be easier.) They could also bump up against one of our ships during one of our ongoing Freedom of Navigation exercises off the Asian coast. The bumping of a ship may seem inconsequential, but keep in mind that in a global media age such an act can have important strategic consequences. Because the world media tend to side with a spoiler rather than with a reigning superpower, the Chinese would have a built-in political advantage.

What should be our military response to such developments? We need to go more unconventional. Our present Navy is mainly a “blue-water” force, responsible for the peacetime management of vast oceanic spaces—no small feat, and one that enables much of the world’s free trade. The phenomenon of globalization could not occur without American ships and sailors. But increasingly what we will need is, in essence, three separate navies: one designed to maintain our ability to use the sea as a platform for offshore bombing (to support operations like the ones in Iraq and Afghanistan); one designed for littoral Special Operations combat (against terrorist groups based in and around Indonesia, Malaysia, and the southern Philippines, for example); and one designed to enhance our stealth capabilities (for patrolling the Chinese mainland and the Taiwan Strait, among other regions). All three of these navies will have a role in deflecting China, directly and indirectly, given the variety of dysfunctional Pacific Island republics that are strengthening their ties with Beijing.

Our aircraft carriers already provide what we need for that first navy; we must further develop the other two. The Special Operations navy will require lots of small vessels, among them the littoral-combat ship being developed by General Dynamics and Lockheed Martin. Approximately 400 feet long, the LCS requires only a small crew, can operate in very shallow water, can travel very fast (up to forty knots), and will deploy Special Operations Forces (namely, Navy SEALs). Another critical part of the littoral navy will be the Mark V special-operations craft. Only eighty feet long, the Mark V can travel at up to fifty knots and has a range of 600 nautical miles. With a draft of only five feet, it can deliver a SEAL platoon directly onto a beach—and at some \$5 million apiece, the Pentagon can buy dozens for the price of just one F/A-22 fighter jet.

Developing the third type of navy will require real changes. Particularly as the media become more intrusive, we must acquire more stealth, so that, for example, we can send commandos ashore from a submarine to snatch or kill terrorists, or leave special operators behind to carry out missions in an area over which no government has control. Submarines have disadvantages, of course: they offer less of a bombing platform than aircraft carriers, and pound for pound are more costly. Nevertheless, they are the wave of the future, in no small measure because protecting aircraft carriers from missile attack may slowly become a pursuit of diminishing returns for us.

Our stealth navy would be best served by the addition of new diesel submarines of the sort that Australia, Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Sweden already have in the water or under development—and which China will soon have too. But because of our global policing responsibilities, which will necessarily keep us in the nuclear-sub business, we’re unlikely to switch to diesel submarines. Instead we will adapt what we’ve got. Already we are refitting four Trident subs with conventional weapons, and making them able to support the deployment of SEAL teams and eventually, perhaps, long-range unmanned spy aircraft. The refitted Tridents can act as big mother ships for smaller assets deployed closer to the littorals.

None of this will change our need for basing rights in the Pacific, of course. The more access to bases we have, the more flexibility we’ll have—to support unmanned flights, to allow aerial refueling, and perhaps most important, to force the Chinese military to concentrate on a host of problems rather than just a few. Never provide your adversary with only a few problems to solve (finding and hitting a carrier, for example), because if you do, he’ll solve them.

Andersen Air Force Base, on Guam’s northern tip, represents the future of U.S. strategy in the Pacific. It is the most potent platform anywhere in the world for the projection of American military power. Landing there recently in a military aircraft, I beheld long lines of B-52 bombers, C-17 Globemasters, F/A-18 Hornets, and E-2 Hawkeye surveillance planes, among others. Andersen’s 10,000-foot runways can handle any plane in the Air Force’s arsenal, and could accommodate the space shuttle should it need to make an emergency landing. The sprawl of runways and taxiways is so vast that when I arrived, I barely noticed a carrier air wing from the USS *Kitty Hawk*, which was making live practice bombing runs that it could not make from its home port in Japan. I saw a truck filled with cruise missiles on one of the runways. No other Air Force base in the Pacific stores as much weaponry as Andersen: some 100,000 bombs and missiles at any one time. Andersen also stores 66 million gallons of jet fuel, making it the Air Force’s biggest strategic gas-and-go in the world.

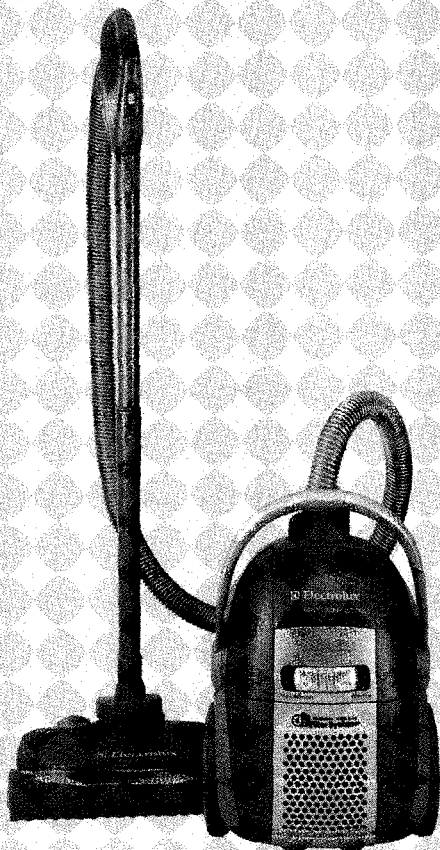
Guam, which is also home to a submarine squadron and

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an expanding naval base, is significant because of its location. From the island an Air Force equivalent of a Marine or Army division can cover almost all of PACOM's area of responsibility. Flying to North Korea from the West Coast of the United States takes thirteen hours; from Guam it takes four.

"This is not like Okinawa," Major General Dennis Larsen, the Air Force commander there at the time of my visit, told me. "This is American soil in the midst of the Pacific. Guam is a U.S. territory." The United States can do anything it wants here, and make huge investments without fear of being thrown out. Indeed, what struck me about Andersen was how great the space was for expansion to the south and west of the current perimeters. Hundreds of millions of dollars of construction funds were being allocated. This little island, close to China, has the potential to become the hub in the wheel of a new, worldwide constellation of bases that will move the locus of U.S. power from Europe to Asia. In the event of a conflict with Taiwan, if we had a carrier battle group at Guam we would force the Chinese either to attack it in port—thereby launching an assault on sovereign U.S. territory, and instantly becoming the aggressor in the eyes of the world—or to let it sail, in which case the carrier group could arrive off the coast of Taiwan only two days later.

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asymmetrically, as terrorists do.
In Iraq the insurgents have shown
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The Chinese are poised to
show us the high end of the art.
That is the threat.**

During the Cold War the Navy had a specific infrastructure for a specific threat: war with the Soviet Union. But now the threat is multiple and uncertain: we need to be prepared at any time to fight, say, a conventional war against North Korea or an unconventional counterinsurgency battle against a Chinese-backed rogue island-state. This requires a more agile Navy presence on the island, which in turn means outsourcing services to the civilian community on Guam so that the Navy can concentrate on military matters. One Navy captain I met with had grown up all over the Pacific Rim. He told me of the Navy's plans to expand the waterfront, build more bachelors' quarters, and harden the electrical-power system by putting it underground. "The fact that we have lots of space today is meaningless," he said. "The question is, How would we handle the surge requirement necessitated by a full-scale war?"

There could be a problem with all of this. By making Guam a Hawaii of the western Pacific, we make life simple

for the Chinese, because we give them just one problem to solve: how to threaten or intimidate Guam. The way to counter them will be not by concentration but by dispersion. So how will we prevent Guam from becoming too big?

In a number of ways. We may build up Palau, an archipelago of 20,000 inhabitants between Mindanao, in the Philippines, and the Federated States of Micronesia, whose financial aid is contingent on a defense agreement with us. We will keep up our bases in Central Asia, close to western China—among them Karshi-Khanabad, in Uzbekistan, and Manas, in Kyrgyzstan, which were developed and expanded for the invasion of Afghanistan. And we will establish what are known as cooperative security locations.

A cooperative security location can be a tucked-away corner of a host country's civilian airport, or a dirt runway somewhere with fuel and mechanical help nearby, or a military airport in a friendly country with which we have no formal basing agreement but, rather, an informal arrangement with private contractors acting as go-betweens. Because the CSL concept is built on subtle relationships, it's where the war-fighting ability of the Pentagon and the diplomacy of the State Department coincide—or should. The problem with big bases in, say, Turkey—as we learned on the eve of the invasion of Iraq—is that they are an intrusive, intimidating symbol of American power, and the only power left to a host country is the power to deny us use of such bases. In the future, therefore, we will want unobtrusive bases that benefit the host country much more obviously than they benefit us. Allowing us the use of such a base would ramp up power for a country rather than humiliating it.

I have visited a number of CSLs in East Africa and Asia. Here is how they work. The United States provides aid to upgrade maintenance facilities, thereby helping the host country to better project its own air and naval power in the region. At the same time, we hold periodic exercises with the host country's military, in which the base is a focus. We also offer humanitarian help to the surrounding area. Such civil-affairs projects garner positive publicity for our military in the local media—and they long preceded the response to the tsunami, which marked the first time that many in the world media paid attention to the humanitarian work done all over the world, all the time, by the U.S. military. The result is a positive diplomatic context for getting the host country's approval for use of the base when and if we need it.

Often the key role in managing a CSL is played by a private contractor. In Asia, for example, the private contractor is usually a retired American noncom, either Navy or Air Force, quite likely a maintenance expert, who is living in, say, Thailand or the Philippines, speaks the language fluently, perhaps has married locally after a divorce back home, and is generally much liked by the locals. He rents his facilities at the base from the host-country military, and then charges a fee to the U.S. Air Force pilots transiting the

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base. Officially he is in business for himself, which the host country likes because it can then claim it is not really working with the American military. Of course no one, including the local media, believes this. But the very fact that a relationship with the U.S. armed forces is indirect rather than direct eases tensions. The private contractor also prevents unfortunate incidents by keeping the visiting pilots out of trouble—steering them to the right hotels and bars, and advising them on how to behave. (Without Dan Generette, a private contractor for years at Utapao Naval Station, in Thailand, that base could never have been ramped up to provide tsunami relief the way it was.)

When power relationships are correctly calibrated, wars tend to be avoided. Only a similarly pragmatic approach will allow us to accommodate China's inevitable—and legitimate—re-emergence as a great power.

Visiting with these contractors and being taken around foreign military airfields by them, I saw how little, potentially, the Air Force would need on the ground in order to land planes and take off. Especially since 9/11 the Air Force has been slowly developing an austere, expeditionary mentality to amend its lifestyle, which has historically been cushy in comparison with that of the other branches of the armed forces. Servicing a plane often takes less on the ground than servicing a big ship, and the Air Force is beginning to grasp the concept of light and lethal, and of stealthy, informal relationships. To succeed in the Pacific and elsewhere, the Navy will need to further develop a similar outlook—thinking less in terms of obvious port visits and more in terms of slipping in and out in the middle of the night.

The first part of the twenty-first century will be not nearly as stable as the second half of the twentieth, because the world will be not nearly as bipolar as it was during the Cold War. The fight between Beijing and Washington over the Pacific will not dominate all of world politics, but it will be the most important of several regional struggles. Yet it will be the organizing focus for the U.S. defense posture abroad. If we are smart, this should lead us back into concert with Europe. No matter how successfully our military adapts to the rise of China, it is clear that our current dominance in the Pacific will not last. The Asia expert Mark Helprin has argued that while we pursue our democratization efforts in the Middle East, increasingly befriending only those states whose internal systems resemble our own, China is poised to reap the substantial benefits

of pursuing its interests amorally—what the United States did during the Cold War. The Chinese surely hope, for example, that our chilly attitude toward the brutal Uzbek dictator, Islam Karimov, becomes even chillier; this would open up the possibility of more pipeline and other deals with him, and might persuade him to deny us use of the air base at Karshi-Khanabad. Were Karimov to be toppled in an uprising like the one in Kyrgyzstan, we would immediately have to stabilize the new regime or risk losing sections of the country to Chinese influence.

We also need to realize that in the coming years and decades the moral distance between Europe and China is going to contract considerably, especially if China's authoritarianism becomes increasingly restrained, and the ever expanding European Union becomes a less-than-democratic superstate run in imperious regulatory style by Brussels-based functionaries. Russia, too, is headed in a decidedly undemocratic direction: Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, reacted to our support of democracy in Ukraine by agreeing to "massive" joint air and naval exercises with the Chinese, scheduled for the second half of this year. These unprecedented joint Russian-Chinese exercises will be held on Chinese territory.

Therefore the idea that we will no longer engage in the "cynical" game of power politics is illusory, as is the idea that we will be able to advance a foreign policy based solely on Wilsonian ideals. We will have to continually play various parts of the world off China, just as Richard Nixon played less than morally perfect states off the Soviet Union. This may well lead to a fundamentally new NATO alliance, which could become a global armada that roams the Seven Seas. Indeed, the Dutch, the Norwegians, the Germans, and the Spanish are making significant investments in fast missile-bearing ships and in landing-platform docks for beach assaults, and the British and the French are investing in new aircraft carriers. Since Europe increasingly seeks to avoid conflict and to reduce geopolitics to a series of negotiations and regulatory disputes, an emphasis on sea power would suit it well. Sea power is intrinsically less threatening than land power. It allows for a big operation without a large onshore footprint. Consider the tsunami effort, during which Marines and sailors returned to their carrier and destroyers each night. Armies invade; navies make port visits. Sea power has always been a more useful means of realpolitik than land power. It allows for a substantial military presence in areas geographically remote from states themselves—but without an overtly belligerent effect. Because ships take so long to get somewhere, and are less threatening than troops on the ground, naval forces allow diplomats to ratchet up pressure during a crisis in a responsible—and reversible—way. Take the Cuban Missile Crisis, in 1962. As the British expert H. P. Willmott has written, "The use of naval power by the Americans was the least dangerous option that presented itself, and the

MAN'S MIND STRETCHED TO A NEW IDEA
NEVER RETURNS TO ITS ORIGINAL DIMENSIONS
-oliver wendell holmes

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slowness with which events unfolded at sea gave time for both sides to conceive and implement a rational response to a highly dangerous situation.”

Submarines have been an exception to this rule, but their very ability to operate both literally and figuratively below the surface, completely off the media radar screen, allows a government to be militarily aggressive, particularly in the field of espionage, without offending the sensibilities of its citizenry. Sweden’s neutrality is a hard-won luxury built on naval strength that many of its idealistic citizens may be incompletely aware of. Pacifistic Japan, the ultimate trading nation, is increasingly dependent on its burgeoning submarine force. Sea power protects trade, which is regulated by treaties; it’s no accident that the father of international law, Hugo Grotius, was a seventeenth-century Dutchman who lived at the height of Dutch naval power worldwide. Because of globalization, the twenty-first century will see unprecedented sea traffic, requiring unprecedented regulation by diplomats and naval officers alike. And as the economic influence of the European Union expands around the globe, Europe may find, like the United States in the nineteenth century and China today, that it has to go to sea to protect its interests.

The ships and other naval equipment being built now by the Europeans are designed to slot into U.S. battle networks. And European nations, which today we conceive of as Atlantic forces, may develop global naval functions; already, for example, Swedish submarine units are helping to train Americans in the Pacific on how to hunt for diesel subs. The sea may be NATO’s and Europe’s best chance for a real military future. And yet the alliance is literally and symbolically weak. For it to regain its political significance, NATO must become a military alliance that no one doubts is willing to fight and kill at a moment’s notice. That was its reputation during the Cold War—and it was so well regarded by the Soviets that they never tested it. Expanding NATO eastward has helped stabilize former Warsaw Pact states, of course, but admitting substandard militaries to the alliance’s ranks, although politically necessary, has been problematic. The more NATO expands eastward, the more superficial and unwieldy it becomes as a fighting force, and the more questionable becomes its claim that it will fight in defense of any member state. Taking in yet more substandard militaries like Ukraine’s and Georgia’s too soon is simply not in NATO’s interest. We can’t just declare an expansion of a defense alliance because of demonstrations somewhere in support of democracy. Rather, we must operate in the way we are now operating in Georgia, where we have sent in the Marines for a year to train the Georgian armed forces. That way, when a country like Georgia does make it into NATO, its membership will have military as well as political meaning. Only by making it an agile force that is ready to land on, say, West African beaches at a few days’ or hours’ notice can we save NATO.

And we need to save it. NATO is ours to lead—unlike the

increasingly powerful European Union, whose own defense force, should it become a reality, would inevitably emerge as a competing regional power, one that might align itself with China in order to balance against us. Let me be even clearer about something that policymakers and experts often don’t want to be clear about. NATO and an autonomous European defense force cannot both prosper. Only one can—and we should want it to be the former, so that Europe is a military asset for us, not a liability, as we confront China.

The Chinese military challenge is already a reality to officers and sailors of the U.S. Navy. I recently spent four weeks embedded on a guided-missile destroyer, the USS *Benfold*, roaming around the Pacific from Indonesia to Singapore, the Philippines, Guam, and then Hawaii.

During my visit the *Benfold* completed a tsunami-relief mission (which consisted of bringing foodstuffs ashore and remapping the coastline) and then recommenced combat drills, run from the ship’s combat-information center—a dark and cavernous clutter of computer consoles. Here a tactical action officer led the response to what were often hypothetical feints or attacks from China or North Korea.

Observing the action in the combat-information center, I learned that although naval warfare is conducted with headphones and computer keyboards, the stress level is every bit as acute as in gritty urban combat. A wrong decision can result in a catastrophic missile strike, against which no degree of physical toughness or bravery is a defense.

Sea warfare is cerebral. The threat is over the horizon; nothing can be seen; and everything is reduced to mathematics. The object is deception more than it is aggression—getting the other side to shoot first, so as to gain the political advantage, yet not having to absorb the damage of the attack.

As enthusiastic as the crew members of the *Benfold* were in helping the victims of the tsunami, once they left Indonesian waters they were just as enthusiastic about honing their surface and subsurface warfare skills. I even picked up a feeling, especially among the senior chief petty officers (the iron grunts of the Navy, who provide the truth unvarnished), that they might be tested in the western Pacific to the same degree that the Marines have been in Iraq. The main threat in the Persian Gulf to date has been asymmetric attacks, like the bombing of the *Cole*. But the Pacific offers all kinds of threats, from increasingly aggressive terrorist groups in the Islamic archipelagoes of Southeast Asia to cat-and-mouse games with Chinese subs in the waters to the north. Preparing to meet all the possible threats the Pacific has to offer will force the Navy to become more nimble, and will make it better able to deal with unconventional emergencies, such as tsunamis, when they arise.

Welcome to the next few decades. As one senior chief put it to me, referring first to the Persian Gulf and then to the Pacific, “The Navy needs to spend less time in that salty little mud puddle and more time in the pond.” ▀

ZIAD FOR THE DEFENSE

*When Saddam Hussein goes on trial, he will not lack for legal defenders.
Heading his team at the moment is a man named Ziad al-Khasawneh*

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

.....

Amid the secrecy and confusion that surround the coming trials of Saddam Hussein and his lieutenants, in Baghdad, a defense committee has formed that is said to consist of 2,000 volunteer lawyers from around the world. A few of those lawyers reside in Iraq. But because of the dangers there for anyone associated with the trials, the committee is based in neighboring Jordan, in the capital city of Amman. It derives its authority from permissions signed by the family of the deposed dictator, and later by Saddam himself, in confinement. Despite circumstantial evidence that it enjoys significant funding, the committee insists that it works for free. It was founded in reaction to the public humiliation suffered by Saddam Hussein upon his arrest in December of 2003, when he was exhibited on global television as a disheveled and defeated man. The committee's lead attorney, a dignified, gray-haired Jordanian named Ziad al-Khasawneh, recently told me in Amman that the circumstances of the arrest were a sham—that in reality Saddam had been captured several months earlier while praying in a house near Tikrit, and that the Americans had fed him drugs and let his hair grow long before pretending to find him in a hole. He also told me that the tsunami of last December had wiped out 20,000 U.S. soldiers whose deaths had been hidden by the Pentagon; that the invasion of Iraq was the product of a Zionist plot whose purpose was the annihilation of the Iraqi people; and that Yasser Arafat had been fatally poisoned by the CIA. Further on the subject of hidden casualties, he said that the American toll in Iraq is much higher than has been acknowledged, and that dead soldiers are routinely stripped of their valuables and identities and dumped from low-flying aircraft into the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. He said that you can go to certain places at night and see the body bags falling. He said that he knows of a goatherd who discovered the secret place

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in the desert where the valuables are dumped, and who has since become rich by harvesting all the watches and rings. I listened with interest,

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not only because Mr. Ziad earnestly holds such beliefs, but also because his willingness to express them serves to some degree as a measure of their acceptability in the Middle East. Certainly Saddam, who has long been admired for his strength, is increasingly seen as a hero of the resistance, and maybe a tragic one. Ziad spoke of him with nearly filial love, as the Caring One. He had pride in his eyes. He explained that the defense committee's mandate, which was originally restricted to Saddam and his "comrades," had been widened by order of Saddam himself, who upon his first prison meeting with a lawyer, on December 16, 2004, declared that the team would henceforth be known as The Defense and Support Committee of

President Saddam Hussein, His Comrades, and All POWs and Detainees in Iraq. This demonstrates, according to Ziad, that Saddam is a selfless man, dedicated to the well-being of his people. It is a view that will lie at the heart of most of the defense arguments in court. And the surprise is that with exceptions made for Saddam's obvious megalomania and the distortions caused by absolute power, the view will be difficult to prove wrong.

In English the initials for the committee are DSCP-SHCPDI, which makes for poor acronyms no matter how the letters are stirred. For simplicity I have thought of "Committee for the Defense," or COD, but this is insufficiently specific, and with its evocation of a fish it would hardly do. In any case, English-speakers do not constitute the important audience for these trials. In Arabic Ziad has done better. He calls the committee ISNAD, an acronym that reflects some descriptive words, means "support," and has a useful religious significance: in Muslim belief an *isnad* is the chain of transmission or authority necessary to legitimize any of the Hadith. The Hadith are accounts of the words or actions of the Prophet, which along with the Koran provide rules for living, and form the basis of Islamic law. The law that will be applied by the Iraqi Special Tribunal is not Islamic. It consists of court procedures and

rules of evidence that are largely Iraqi (and historically based on European models), and of substantive laws imported into Iraq from international courts by the American occupation authorities in 2004 for this single, strictly bounded use: laws pertaining to genocide, crimes against humanity, and the violations of the Geneva Conventions loosely known as war crimes. These laws are explicitly secular, as will be the punishments that are meted out—in the extreme, death by gunshot or hanging, rather than by the stroke of a sword or the impact of stones. Like Saddam Hussein, Ziad is more of an old-fashioned pan-Arab socialist than he is any sort of new-wave Islamist. Nonetheless, even an oblique reference to faith is helpful in these parts, and with his use of the name ISNAD, Ziad demonstrates a nice touch.

Beyond that, however, his grasp seems uncertain. In fairness to him, the terrain he must operate on is murky and viciously politicized. To the management question of how in the world to use 2,000 volunteer lawyers, most of whom are Arab and almost none of whom dare to go to Iraq, the best answer is not to use them at all—and this, by appearances, Ziad is doing well enough. On several occasions we talked after hours in his small office suite, on an avenue named after the Jordanian queen, in a middle-class district

Ziad leads a defense team for Saddam that is said to consist of 2,000 volunteer lawyers. It derives its authority from permissions signed by the family of the deposed dictator, and later by Saddam himself, in confinement.

of Amman. Ziad is a very short man with a large potbelly. Because his face is regular, these attributes become apparent only when he stands up, at which point they come as a surprise. With me he sat behind his desk most of the time. He wore a suit and tie. His desk was neat but not empty. In addition to some stacks of paper it held an office telephone, a portable telephone, and, to one side, a laptop computer firmly connected to the Internet by a high-speed line. We drank strong, sweet coffee and once ate pastries baked by his wife. He does not smoke, which is rare for these parts. His assistants came and went, sat with us, and helped with translations. Messages arrived by phone and e-mail indicating that members of the committee were holding local meetings and issuing resolutions of solidarity. I did not doubt that these emotions mattered. But 2,000 lawyers? I asked Ziad how they had been selected. He prevaricated at first, but later said in essence that they had selected themselves, by signing on. I pressed him to describe of what practical use they were proving to be.

Their support is heartening, he said.

And?

And in practice there are about twenty-five who form a core team, and among whom the real work has been divided. They include several lawyers in Baghdad of Iraqi nationality—this being a statutory requirement for practicing before the special tribunal. One of those is an attorney named Khalil al-Dulaimi, who was the first to see Saddam Hussein, last December, and who then came under threat of death and has since gone into hiding; the others in Iraq, whose visits to the defendants have been extremely limited, have wisely kept a lower profile—indeed, they remain anonymous for now. In contrast, a few on the team outside Iraq are clearly drawn to the limelight—as one might expect with any such high-visibility trial. One of them is the former French foreign minister Roland Dumas, claimed by ISNAD as a prominent member, who when I went to see him last year—an elegant old man in an elegant residence on elegant Ile Saint Louis—had nothing of substance to say, and was clearly just enjoying the attention. More significant, perhaps, the team includes Muammar Qaddafi's glamorous daughter Aisha, who at age twenty-seven teaches law in Tripoli, calls herself Doctor, and happens (unlike her father) to be possessed of an unusual Riviera-style beauty. Aisha seems to be positioning herself to succeed her father as Libya's leader. She once appeared with Nelson Mandela on television, and several years before the American invasion she flew to Iraq bearing gifts for its beleaguered people in self-important protest of the international sanctions then in place. Others on the team are privately embarrassed by her presence—including a French lawyer named Emmanuel Ludot, who winced when I mentioned Aisha's participation to him in Paris. Ludot himself, however, seems to be a rather questionable asset. He is the author of a wildly revisionist argument published last year in French as *Saddam Hussein: Presumed Guilty*, which to the extent that it reflects a plan for the defense, signals big trouble ahead for the accused. More reasonable-sounding is the former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark, who has joined the team, and who, despite his reputation for poor political judgment in the past (for instance, he served as legal counsel to Saddam's regime), makes the obvious but important point that fair trials in Baghdad are now in America's interest, and that Saddam and his lieutenants must be well defended.

With Ziad in Amman, I kept trying to get back to this idea of the real preparations being made. Repeatedly I asked him to explain to me as much as he could about the logic and tactics of the defense. He said that he would, and gladly, but he continued to speak in generalities, starting with his belief in the rule of law, and lingering over the illegality of the American invasion of Iraq—a point, as he said, that UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has also made. Since the invasion was illegal, Ziad said, everything that has followed has been illegitimate, including the Iraqi governments installed by the Americans, and the bastard

child called the Iraqi Special Tribunal. Saddam Hussein is the victim of raw imperial aggression. He is innocent, and on both moral and legal grounds he should not even stand trial. He remains the president of Iraq.

Ziad said, "Every day a lot of letters come to this office about this issue, because it is not just a defense of Saddam Hussein in person. It is also a defense of the Arab nation, and of humanity in general. This trend of aggression matters to every country, and it may matter inside the USA! Inside the USA! I know that Mr. Bush has executed about a hundred and twenty people in Texas. And this cowboy mentality now spreads into the whole world. We cannot accept a universe that is run according to the power of power, not the power of law!"

I said, "Right."

He said, "We seek to defend all peoples against the aggressions of America!"

"Okay, but ..."

"*Haram!*" he said, meaning "forbidden by God." "Do you know what *haram* means?"

"I do."

Moments later he said, "Regarding the prosecution charges that we have learned about from the Internet, they do not apply to the laws that existed before the occupation. The constitution gives the president complete immunity. So we believe that the United States is in a legal crisis, in addition to its military crisis in Iraq."

He seemed to be challenging the retroactive nature of the charges—the fact that genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes were not addressed by Iraqi law at the time that the acts are alleged to have been committed. It is not an issue to be cheaply dismissed, particularly for a national court in a civil-law tradition like Iraq's, where customary behavior is given little weight, and the criminalization of acts is expected to be codified. Certainly the concept that there is no crime without law (*nullum crimen sine lege*) has provided historical protections against what Ziad calls the power of power. Nonetheless, if Ziad plans to use this as a practical argument, he will be trying to cover ground that international criminal law has in recent decades repeatedly gone around. I said, "But where are you going to make that argument? In which court?"

He said, "From the start as a defense committee we have considered all kinds of courts. Anyhow, if there is a trial, we will make every challenge. If the tribunal is impartial and just, it will take our point of view."

"But do you think the tribunal is going to be just?"

"Certainly not!"

I said, "Saddam will be tried and convicted."

He said, "We see the light at the end of the tunnel."

"What is that light?"

"We believe that there is a feeling of shame among the American people. This is the light we mean."

"You're going to rely on the American people?"

He said, "Yes. All the law-loving people in America will stand on the side of justice."

I said, "I think they think that Saddam Hussein is guilty of killing people. I think they would be very much against Saddam's going free."

He mentioned the importance of Ramsey Clark to his strategy. A very famous man. He also said that he himself would carry the message to the United States. "I wish to go to America to talk to the media, the newspapers, the magazines. To say to the many people of America, and to the American Congress, that they must stand on the side of justice and rightness."

"Are you going to go to the United States now?"

"I am trying, but until now I can't get a visa."

I tacked. "Okay, if Saddam is released—let's say the American courts decide this has been an illegal detention, and he must be released. What do you think will happen to him? Where will he go? What will he do?"

"He should return to his position. Until this moment he is the legitimate president. Now, if you can imagine! American soldiers leave Iraq, and President Saddam is released from prison! You can imagine the result!"

"No. I can't imagine. I don't know Iraq that well. Tell me."

"He will take over again! Remember the case of Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle with the Vichy government was like Saddam with the Allawi government. And history is everything!"

"But do you think the Iraqis want Saddam back as president?"

"After what they witnessed in Abu Ghraib, and the acts of stealing, the acts of violence—after the occupation in general—they will like Saddam more than before. And the destruction of towns, and of cities like Fallujah. And the bombings. Also the radioactivity. A lot of people are coming to me now and saying, 'Those were the good days, when Saddam was our leader!'"

I said, "Two thoughts come to mind. The first is that Saddam himself took power in an extralegal, or illegal, way. He did it through force of arms."

"And he will return by force! Armed resistance!"

"But that's not the rule of law."

Forbearingly he said, "This is the Third World. It is not unusual."

I said, "Okay, now my second thought. Yes, the Iraqis see all the problems with the occupation that you have been talking about."

"Yes!"

"And they do remember that under Saddam there was order."

"There was security!"

"But they also remember that he killed many people."

"It is not true!"

"Not true?"

Ziad was practically triumphant. He said, "Did anyone see him killing people? *That* is the problem!"

But what about conspiracy? What about command responsibility? These are actionable concepts that will permeate the trials. I thought it was time to make some accommodations to culture. I realized that Ziad is not a stupid man. I decided we needed a break.

In practice Ziad is as good an attorney as Saddam and his family are likely to find. This is paradoxical, because Ziad is stuck in Jordan, far from the evidence and the defendants, and Iraq is a country brimming with lawyers, many of whom despite the dangers would like to be involved. The problem is that after three decades of totalitarian rule, during which the law served as hardly more than a veneer, Iraqi lawyers have been weakened to the point where many now seem to have difficulty applying themselves to anything at all. The effects can be seen in the confusion and inefficiency that have characterized the creation of the Iraqi Special Tribunal: to the private frustration of their American advisers, many Iraqi judges and prosecutors have spent the past year stumbling over simple legal concepts, and otherwise mostly just sitting around the tribunal offices, reading newspapers and drinking tea. Among the defense attorneys I've met in Baghdad the scene is equally dismal.

Saddam's defense team includes Muammar Qaddafi's glamorous daughter Aisha, who at age twenty-seven teaches law in Tripoli, calls herself Doctor, and happens (unlike her father) to be possessed of an unusual Riviera-style beauty.

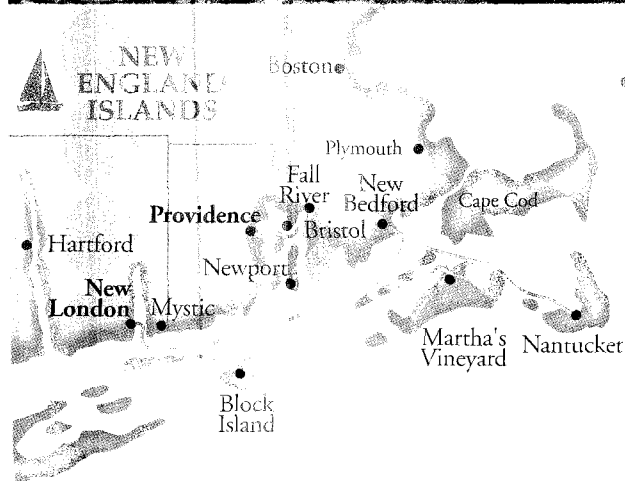
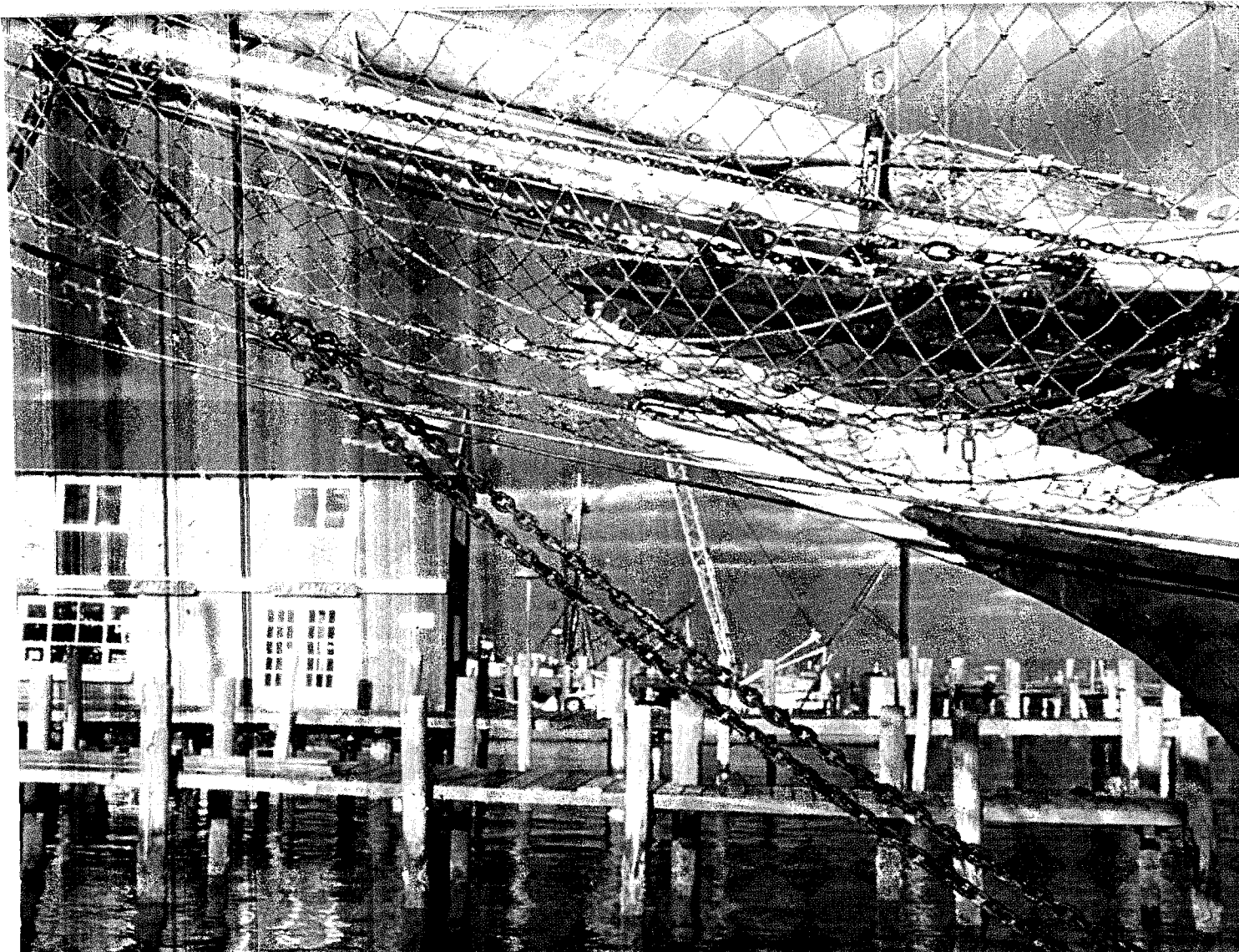
For instance, at the U.S.-established Central Criminal Court, where insurgents and other prisoners accused of the most serious crimes are taken to be tried, public defenders typically first meet their clients during the investigative phase of the trial. With no advance knowledge of a case, they hardly bother to thumb the paperwork, let alone to intervene with forceful representations. On the occasions when they might normally visit people in prison—say, to investigate allegations of torture or other violations of their clients' rights—they have to travel at their own expense through the war zone, and afterward to run the even greater risk of police reprisals. And for what? They earn fifteen dollars an appearance, and barely scrape by. It is hard to summon the clarity necessary for legal reasoning when you mark your days in dirty hallways by bumming cigarettes from like-minded men.

Last year, during the waning weeks of the American occupation government, at a time when there was still some hope for establishing an honest and independent judiciary in Iraq, I drove to the Baghdad headquarters of the Iraqi Bar Associa-

tion to meet with a group of young lawyers who had been praised to me by U.S. officials as agents for positive change. The change that the officials had in mind was, of course, in the direction of an American way of thinking. The headquarters was in a typically spacious Saddam-era building, mostly empty now, and typically run-down. Beyond the guards carrying Kalashnikovs, a couple of women stood talking in a dusty entrance hall. Eventually I found the young lawyers sitting loosely in a large back room. There were about twenty of them there. Some were young, and others were middle-aged. They had arranged their chairs in a large square. I had hoped for an informal exchange on the subject of the confusion at the special tribunal. I needed practical explanations. Instead, one by one, the lawyers gave me speeches. This went on for over an hour. They did not seem to have prepared their speeches in advance, but when I tried to break through, they were unable simply to talk. Repeatedly they expressed their welcome to me, their thanks to the United States, and their firm belief in the importance of modernity. They expected me to write down their words. I was aware that Iraqis are more formal and flowery than we are. But I was disturbed that they had so much time to express so little. I did not think they really meant what they said. I did not think they were actually so grateful. I sensed that beneath their words some of them seethed with frustration and, deeper still, with a growing anger toward the United States. I felt for their humiliation. And I was embarrassed for the American officials who could so easily be taken in.

Six months later it was this same Iraqi Bar Association, having been solicited by Ziad, that arranged for one of its members, Khalil al-Dulaimi, to meet with Saddam Hussein and offer him defense counsel for the first time. By then Saddam and eleven others had been "arraigned" on television in improvised proceedings of dubious meaning, which backfired politically when Saddam visibly summoned his powers of command and began to dominate the show. He and the others had been transferred as criminals to the authority of the newly sovereign Iraqi state, though physically they remained in the custody of the U.S. military, on bases near the Baghdad airport, where they continue to be held today. Saddam had gone through a year of secret intelligence interrogations, which, to the extent that they amounted to anything at all, produced classified information that could not be shown to the Iraqis or used in court. More recently he had been interviewed by prosecutors and investigative judges from the special tribunal. Otherwise he had been kept in near-total isolation, cut off from the world outside his cell except for a few visits by the Red Cross, and two letters from his family. By now, in December of 2004, Ziad had been making enough noise that this was due to change.

Dulaimi is a Sunni from a powerful tribe in the angry province of Anbar. American soldiers met him outside the bar-association building in Baghdad, loaded him into an armored car with blacked-out windows, and drove him cir-



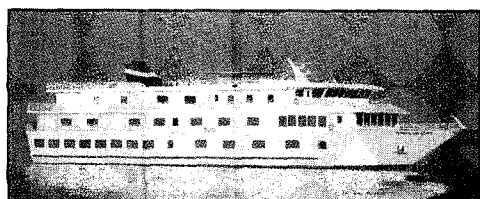
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cuitously to the base where Saddam is held. According to Ziad, Dulaimi was instructed not to shake Saddam's hand or have any physical contact with him—orders which he proudly defied when he was brought in to see the captive. Dulaimi saluted Saddam as the president of Iraq. This pleased Saddam greatly. As Ziad reconstructs the scene, the dictator's first words to Dulaimi were those of a well-known maxim: "If you are not a head, don't be anything else, because that would make you a tail." By this he meant that he had no choice but to remain the leader of Iraq. He had long hair and a thick beard. His face had aged. He had lost some weight. He was in high spirits and good health. As befits a heroic leader in times like these, he had been gardening, writing poetry, and drawing inspiration from the Koran. He said he had been tortured but remained proud and unbowed. Speaking of his own stand, he quoted from the Koran: "Don't be weak, don't grieve, for you are the best."

The meeting continued for more than four hours. Saddam was hungry for news. According to Ziad, he asked Dulaimi about the condition of the Iraqi people, of the Arab nation, and especially of the Palestinians. Dulaimi described the Iraqi resistance. Saddam expressed his satisfaction, and said that the struggle was proceeding according to plan. He called Bush a liar, and predicted that he would leave Iraq a defeated man—"through the small door," he said, by which he meant ignobly. He praised Germany and France for their opposition to American aggression, and welcomed Spain's withdrawal from the fight. He sent his greetings to the other detained Iraqi leaders. At the sound of combat jets flying overhead, he guessed that the target was Fallujah, and he expressed concern for the people there. When Dulaimi told him about the plan for national elections, he warned of an American scheme to divide Iraq. He said that Kurds, Shiites, Sunnis, and Christians needed to stand united against the American plot. He quoted from the Koran: "Hold on to God's law, and do not scatter."

For the defendants, however, it is not God's laws but those of the special tribunal that would seem to matter. In Amman with Ziad, I kept pressing for evidence of a tangible defense. Eventually we got past the idea of the court's illegitimacy, and proceeded to the near certainty that the trials would soon begin. We crossed the question of whether witnesses had seen these defendants killing anyone, bridged the concepts of command authority and criminal conspiracy, and came at last to what appeared to be Ziad's plan to deny, for each charge, that these crimes had actually been committed. On the subject of the 1988 Anfal campaign against the Kurds—an ethnic roundup that is said to have killed at least 50,000 people, and has often been called a genocide—Ziad said, "It was a response to a public disorder. And it has to be compared in one way or another to the actions of the United States itself in the case of a state of mutiny." This seemed chancy for courtroom use, since even in civil war there are

customary (and treaty-based) limitations on the slaughter of civilians—but at least the argument lay in the realm of reality. I suggested that there is a difference between the political and the legal use of the word "genocide"—that the legal definition is necessarily strict, and that a prosecution based on it might be defeated by evidence that despite all the dead, many Kurds captured in the Anfal campaign were ultimately released. This is a problem that the prosecutors in Baghdad are of course aware of. And of course Ziad gladly agreed.

Gradually, however, it became clear that Ziad plans not to argue such points of law but to debate the history on which each charge is built. For example, the use of gas against the northern town of Halabja, which caused at least 4,000 civilian deaths on a single day in March of 1988: though most observers at the time concluded that the attack was the work of the Iraqi military, and that it was directed against a Kurdish insurgency that had allied itself with invaders from Iran, countertheories have always existed, and continue to float on the Internet today. Ziad said, "Documents from the Pentagon that we have obtained, and from the CIA also, prove that the gas was in the hands of the Iranian army, not the Iraqi army. So Halabja was not gassed by the Iraqis. When Iran and Iraq were fighting, and Rumsfeld looked from high above, he knew everything about it. And he believes that the gas was in the hands of the Iranians."

The conversation proceeded to the subject of mass graves, and particularly to those in the south, where the bodies of slain civilians were dumped during another prosecutable offense—the suppression of the Shiite rebellion that followed Iraq's 1991 defeat in Kuwait. Ziad said, "Tony Blair has said that the mass graves are a lie."

I said, "Tony Blair?"

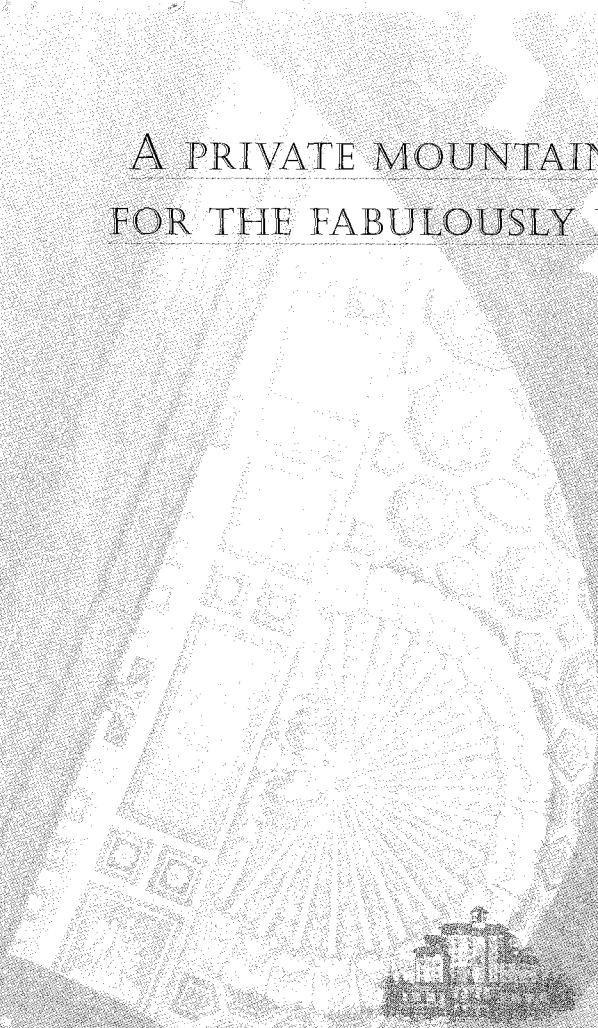
"Yes. We have that on the Internet. And they consider the suppression of the rebellion as an act of war, not a war crime." He did not specify who "they" are. Without explaining the relevance to his courtroom plans, he said, "We have about two thousand names of Iraqi soldiers who were slaughtered by the Kuwaiti army while they were withdrawing from Kuwait."

As to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, which constitutes another prosecution charge at the special tribunal, Ziad's point was essentially that the Kuwaitis deserved what they got. He said, "Kuwaitis exploited the weakness of Iraq after the war [with Iran] to pump huge quantities of oil. The Kuwaitis were boasting that they were going to fuck Iraqi women for ten dollars each. For Arabs and Muslims in general, this insult means a lot. We also have to take into consideration the fact that Kuwait was historically part of Iraq. And that Iraq, with all of its space, doesn't have a coast. Allawi on the TV has boasted that he was an agent of the CIA—but even such a man, if he had been in charge, his first priority would have been to take back Kuwait. I mean *any* Iraqi, whatever his brief, his first priority would have been to take Kuwait."

Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was indeed popular in Iraq



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at the time, and it remains justifiable in the minds of many Iraqis today. But in Ziad's mixture of fact and fantasy, in his confusion of ideas, it was hard to see the possibilities for anything like a legal defense. I found myself sympathizing with him, despite his obvious enthusiasm for the killing of Westerners in Iraq. He seems to be an honorable person, hardworking, and probably intelligent enough. I appreciated the fact that he is not slick in the manner of an American hired gun—that the very contradictions in his arguments make it apparent that he is sincere. But he is suffering from profound isolation. It is the isolation of being an Arab in Amman, educated at the local university but cut off from significant contact with the outside world, smothered by his culture's history of defeat, starved on the thin gruel of a censored press, and kept from the sort of practical information that he needs to do his job. He cannot go to the United States. He cannot go to Iraq. He has been denied access to the defendants in prison. He has been denied access to the documentary evidence that is slowly being entered into a database in Baghdad. He has seen no depositions, and does not know if they have been taken. He has not been informed of the rules of evidence and procedure. He has not been informed of the charges. He says that the closest contact he

There is no doubt about the guilt of Saddam Hussein and his men. They will be convicted, and it is likely that some will be sentenced to die. But they need to be well defended if it is ever to be believed that they were well tried.

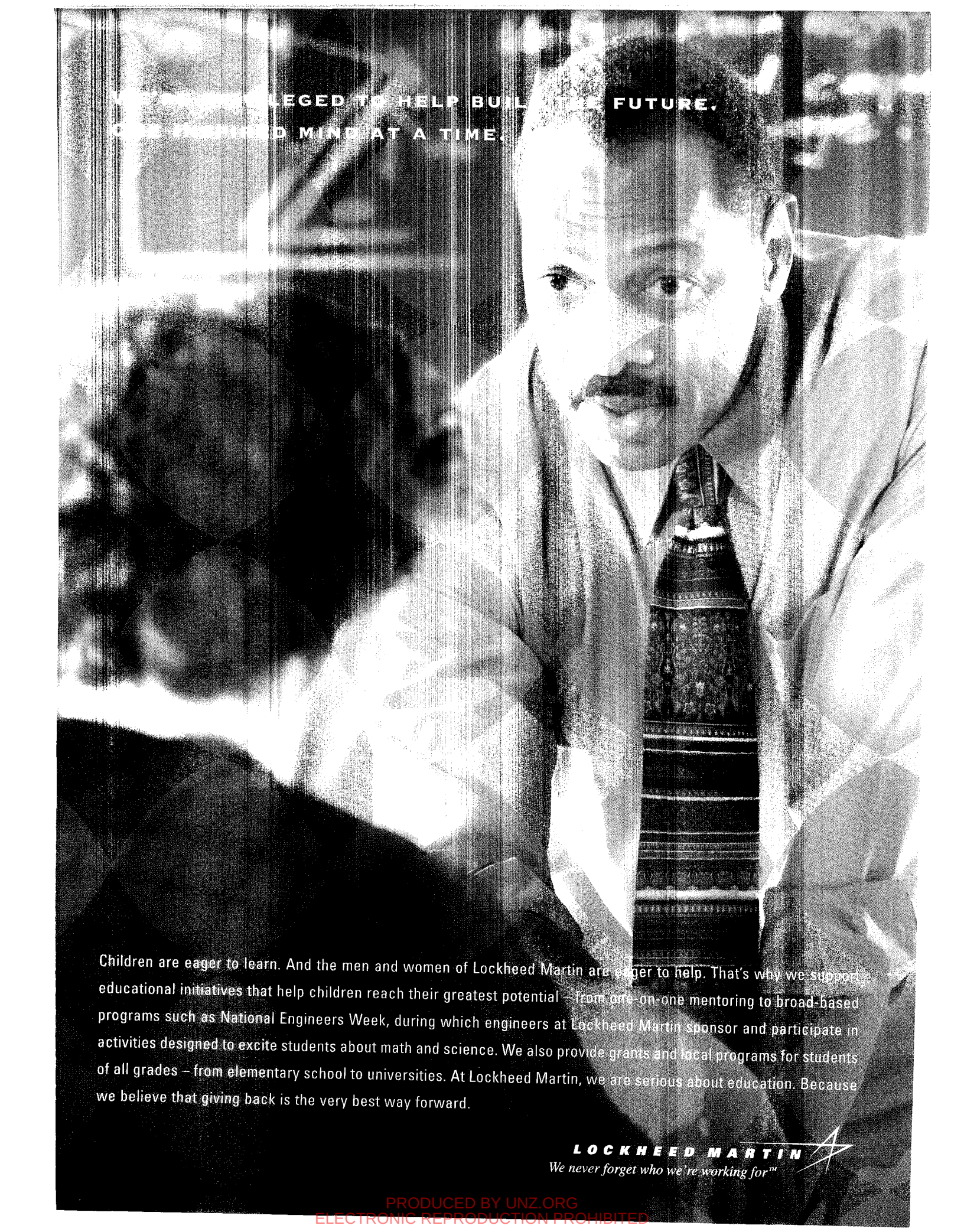
has had is with the Iraqi minister of justice, Malik Dohan al-Hassan, who warned him in Beirut several months ago that if he appeared in Baghdad, he would be cut into little pieces. He read the warning as a promise. There have been no phone calls from the officials at the tribunal. Ziad's letters have remained unanswered. Abandoned, therefore, like so many other frustrated intellects in the world today, he wanders through the wilds of the Internet, reassured by the appearance of a global connection, but essentially alone and exposed to the Internet's depredations. He refers to it often in conversation as if it were an authority in itself. And this in turn explains a lot.

It is understandable if the American and Iraqi officials at the special tribunal in Baghdad have not catered to Ziad's needs. From their perspective, he is a Jordanian grandstander, with his silly ISNAD, his 2,000 lawyers, and his feverish insistence on the heroism of Saddam Hussein. He is not exactly a clown, but he brings a carnival atmosphere to this whole affair. Moreover, though he appears to have Saddam's

approval, and is widely represented in the press as the lead defense attorney, he will probably never appear in court, and may ultimately prove to be irrelevant. Or not. Either way, there are public defenders already in Baghdad who are agreeably anonymous, who comply with the nominal requirements of a defense, and who can be counted on not to gum up the procedures or go wild in public. To questions about the quality of these lawyers the approved answer is that they are "smart." In other words, they are smart enough. The tribunal officials are besieged. They move about inside the fortified Green Zone in an atmosphere of fear, hemmed in by the rows of blast walls that grow along the streets in a perfect representation of the politics involved. Because their challenges are practical, their horizons are near. They have to get this tribunal up and running, finish the necessary construction, train the judges and prosecutors, rehearse the procedures, and resolve the details of public access and the question of what the "openness" of an open court really means. They have to prepare the evidence and arguments for the first few cases. Oh, and the telephones don't work. And their own people keep getting killed in the war outside.

It is probably unfair to expect officials under such pressures to have stood back and contemplated the larger task, but it might have helped if they had. For the tribunal to succeed amid the human desolation of the Middle East, the defense teams need just as much support and attention as the prosecutors and judges have turned out to require. There is no doubt about the guilt of Saddam Hussein and his men. They will be convicted, and it is likely that some will be sentenced to die. But they need to be well defended if it is ever to be believed that they were well tried. The symmetry is necessary. The theater matters. Helping an advocate like Ziad is politically difficult and no certain thing, but if only for the sake of appearances, the tribunal could have benefited from trying—providing ISNAD with an office and lodgings inside the Green Zone, giving the group ample time with the prisoners, arranging for access to the seized documents, and perhaps even providing a research staff. Assistance to ISNAD would have shown fairness and courage. Instead, increasingly, what the tribunal has shown is fear.

The twist is that in his very isolation—in his fevers about conspiracy, his wanderings of the Internet, his anger over the use of American power—Ziad embodies just the audience that the tribunal needs to address. The tribunal has little real purpose other than that. Moreover, by excluding him, and forcing all those like him outside, it may end up empowering him, and playing into Saddam's hands. Saddam cannot really believe, as Ziad maintains, that someday he will be freed. He is playing to history, as he long has, on a thousand-year plan. It is possible that he does not even care whether he is sentenced to death, and that Ziad out of necessity will end up not caring either. Indeed, there are signs already that Saddam's conviction will mark his second coming. And if that turns out to be true, Ziad will have won after all. ▀



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ROAD TRIP PART II

*What would Tocqueville say? A journey continues,
from Seattle to San Diego via Alcatraz and an obesity clinic*

BY BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY

Translated by Charlotte Mandell

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SEATTLE MON AMOUR

Nothing is more striking about Seattle than the moment of arrival.

I loved the city itself, of course.

I loved that feeling of wide-openness on the Sound, the current of brisk air that touches you despite the summer heat.

I loved Seattle's delicate, sun-speckled docks. Its pulsing, heterogeneous marketplace, where highly specialized bookstores, shops selling collectible posters, myriad bars, are all wedged between two shimmering fish markets. During the day I loved the breeze that rises from the water as if to widen the streets, and in the evening the summer mist, wispy, a little gray, which stops, mysteriously, at the waterfront. I loved the city's hills and its interminable steps, the floating bridge over Lake Washington, the boats leaving for Alaska or Panama. I loved those "boulevards without movement or commerce" around First Avenue, and I loved the "drunkenness of a big capital" that soars over Capitol Hill and its sidewalks inlaid with bronze dance steps. I loved the Jimi Hendrix museum—or is it the Paul Allen museum? Or the Frank Gehry museum? I don't quite know what to call it. What can you say, really, when the most generous patron helps the greatest architect build the most extraordinary rock-and-roll museum? I loved the air of freedom, of nonconformism, that reigns over the economic

capital of this state about which they said, during the time of the great strikes after World War I, "There are forty-seven states in the United States, plus the Soviet of Washington." And I loved the fact that this city that in a distant past endured the most savage anti-Asian riots in the history of the United States is today near the top in welcoming the influx of people from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Seoul, Beijing. I loved the fact that this post-American metropolis—where, if it has to invent itself somewhere, the American civilization of tomorrow will invent itself—remains, despite everything, so obstinately European.

I liked Frank Blethen, a man with a white beard, imitation Hemingway and genuine publisher and part owner of the *Seattle Times*, who is fighting against the Hearst empire for the survival of his paper, and through his paper for the survival of the family press, whose fate, by his lights, is linked to that of democracy.

In Redmond I visited that city-within-a-city, surrounded by pine trees, green lawns, little lakes, that is the headquarters of Microsoft. I met some of the engineers, from Mexico, France, and India, who are inventing the language and social fabric of the future. And here, too, I loved the feeling of imagination, youth, chic and atypical bohemianness, irreverence, cosmopolitanism, civilization, intelligence, that this strange group of people radiated. All this recent research, for instance,

*Bernard-Henri Lévy is a writer and philosopher who lives in Paris. He is the author of many books, including *Barbarism With a Human Face*, *Who Killed Daniel Pearl?*, and *War, Evil, and the End of History*. This is the second of several articles.*

MATTHEW MAHON

into graphic recognition. And the enthusiasm when the idea arose to apply the method to the manuscripts of Joyce, Dickens, Dostoyevsky, Hugo, and to encourage the writers of today to go back to the tradition of handwriting. The uplifting wind of elation that rose in the tiny room, empty and white, aseptic yet warm, at the mere idea of having in their hands—they, the offspring of Bill Gates, prodigies of science and culture—the means of thus crossbreeding the wildest modernity with the very symbol of archaism.

I visited the Boeing factories. I spent half a day in a landscape of girders and giant winches worthy of a larger-than-life Fernand Léger; of mini-buildings inside cavernous hangars; of walls of monitors, monstrous pipes and chrome caterpillars, immense jetways, colossal scaffolding, open bellies and steel guts, fuselages and armor plates, where occurs that miracle of high technology that is the assembling of a new plane. And I loved the fact that the officiants at this miracle, on whose shoulders rests a responsibility made twice as pressing by security issues and terrorist threats, looked like hippies with ponytails as they worked coolly to a Rolling Stones riff.

I loved, on the corner of First Avenue and Virginia Street, the bistro Le Pichet, whose sign says in French that it's "a bar during the day and a café at night" and serves "regional specialties all day." I met Ron Reagan there, son of Ronald and Nancy, whose speech on stem-cell research was one of the two big events of the Democratic convention (Barack Obama's speech was the other), and I liked seeing him this way—in a jean jacket and a khaki T-shirt, looking unkempt and sleepy, improvising a dance step in the morning sun (for, he told me, he was once a dancer, a professional ballet dancer). I liked seeing him again that morning, relaxed and joking, imitating President Bush's diffidence on the day of Reagan's funeral. "Come on, George," Nancy whispered to Bush when she caught sight of him, completely terrified, arms dangling, as un-presidential as could be, faced with the circle of the Reagan family that so impressed him. "Come on, George, say something to us!" And he, petrified with timidity, his Adam's apple quivering, could find nothing to say other than a little strangled "How are you?" And I also liked hearing Ron Reagan tell me about what was behind his Boston speech, and how that very morning the Democratic speechwriters had tried to unload on him a ready-made speech, full of clichés—*No, thanks, can't say that, it'll be my text or nothing, and if it's nothing, no problem, I'll go back to Seattle, where I'm happy*...

I liked absolutely everything about Seattle.

If I had to choose an American city to live in—if I had to pick a place, and only one, where I had the feeling in America of rediscovering my lost bearings—it would be here, in Seattle.

If I had to choose one moment in this discovery—if I had to say what the instant was when everything was settled and, in the blink of an eye, the genius of the place was revealed to me—it would be the moment when, arriv-

ing from Spokane on Highway 90, having stopped at a motel in Moses Lake for a late-afternoon sandwich, having crossed the pine forests of Washington State and then the orchards of Wanatchee, having passed Mercer Island and then the Homer Hadley Bridge, I saw, floating like a torch between two motionless clouds, in a dark-pink sky entirely new to me, the tip of a skyscraper, the Space Needle, already completely lit up, which in my imagination suddenly condensed everything that America has always made me dream of: poetry and modernity, precariousness and technical challenge, lightness of form meshed with a Babel syndrome, city lights, the haunting quality of darkness, tall trees of steel. Ever since I was little I've so loved saying "*gratte-ciels*"—"skyscrapers."

AN EVENING IN GAYLAND

At the entrance to Power Exchange, a partner-swapping club in San Francisco, at the corner of Otis and Gough, this uncompromising sign: NO ALCOHOL. NO DRUGS. NO SLEEPING. NO UPROARIOUS OR LOUD LAUGHTER. CONDOMS OBLIGATORY. TURN ALL CELL PHONES OFF. IF SOMEONE SAYS NO TO YOU, PLEASE DO NOT INSIST. The inside is luxurious. Libertine and conventional. Depraved and proper. On the one hand, menacing labyrinths and cells surrounded by wire mesh and painted cobwebs, where torture devices are set up that look straight out of either the Marquis de Sade's *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* or François Reichenbach's *Sex O'Clock USA*, the film that was so effective in the 1970s at popularizing in Europe the image of a free, bold America, one that was throwing the last conventions out the window and continuing to push the limits of dissoluteness ever further. And on the other hand, a quirky clientele, friendly, almost well-behaved, and, incidentally, surprisingly old. Hesitant cordiality of first encounters. Courteous nods. A fat Japanese lady with red hair and a whip who asks a gentleman if he'd like to be tortured; the gentleman answers, "Yes, but not too much, please—make sure you don't hurt me, and no biting." Women's clothing demurely folded at the entrance to the pleasure tents. An atmosphere in the changing rooms like that at a gym or a pool. And beneath the fake Egyptian pyramid they hinted about at the entrance (with knowing looks that left everything to the imagination and made you suspect that the most inventive and unspeakable acts occurred there), a woman wearing a garter belt who has curled up in a corner and gone to sleep, and two old gay men in conversation, their voices low so as not to wake her up, towels tied around their waists and draped over their shoulders, because they're cold. It's like the gay clubs in the Castro.

How strange, by the way, this name—Castro—is! How ironic that the city's gay district, a place where two men in the streets can hold hands and kiss each other full on the mouth, where at nightfall all the bars, restaurants, nightclubs, and cinemas are gay, and where not being gay makes

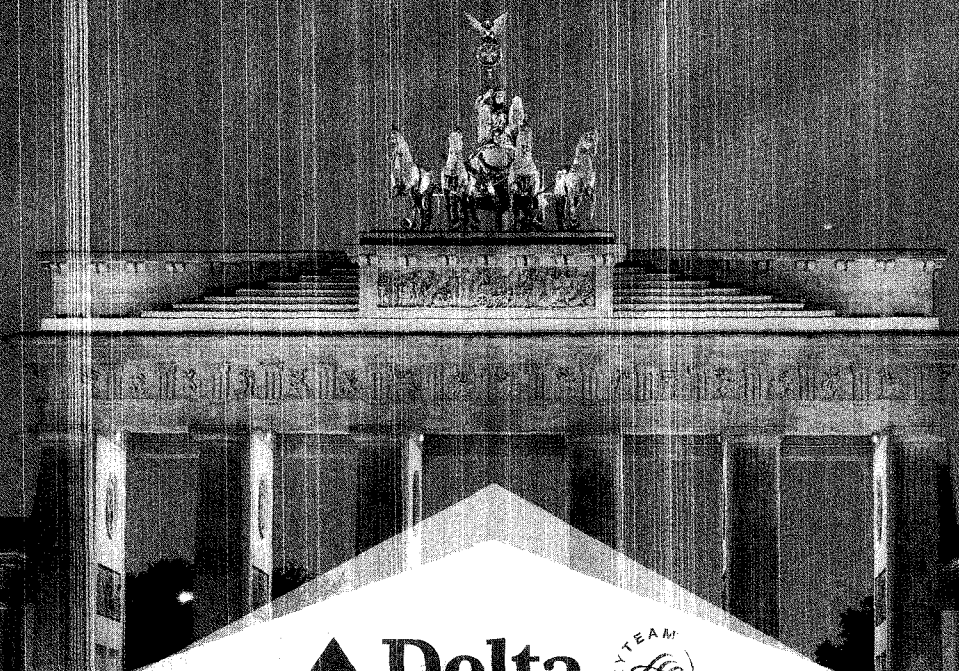
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you feel ill at ease—how ironic that this open-air Cage aux Folles, this carnival of liberated and assertive homosexuality, this permanent Gay Pride, this Cayland, bears the name of the most homophobic of caudillos!

It's like in the Castro, then. There the floor shows have a certain boldness. Tonight, for instance, a drag queen dressed as Rita Hayworth performs and sings like Gilda, not about the "Cisco quake" of 1906 but about the other one, the real one, the enormous "Big One," the sexual liberation of the sixties and the welcome disintegration of all unnatural prohibitions: "They said that old Mother Nature / Was up to her old tricks / That's the story that went around / But here's the real lowdown / Put the blame on Mame, boys / Put the blame on Mame." Further on, in a New Age cabaret open to the street, its walls plastered with photos of naked men, are two over-the-top drag queens, gesturing frenetically on a makeshift stage. One, in a figure-hugging dress, black stockings, mammoth silicone breasts, and blonde wig, sings and acts out songs that feature Michael Jackson, who "shook his baby out the window. Why? To shake off the sperm." The other, also blonde, but lanky, flat, fake boa around her neck, hurls herself at the clients, goes out to the sidewalk to fetch them, throws herself at their feet, pretends to jerk them off between her fake breasts, utters little cries, swoons. You can find joke-and-

past. San Francisco and its ghosts. San Francisco and its frozen revolution. Once upon a time in San Francisco, the city of all excesses and the wildest orgies—the city, too, it should be said in passing, where in one night, in a former garage at the intersection of Union and Fillmore, the literary generation was born that from Kerouac to Lamantia, from Michael McClure to Philip Whalen, Allen Ginsberg, and Gary Snyder, most transformed America, and thus the world, for half a century. Now this city has become a conservatory of audacity, a museum of successful liberations, a tomb for 300,000 activists, escapees from the merry apocalypse of the sixties—the proof, too, that perhaps the time has come in America to choose between reality and commemoration, between living and surviving.

ONCE UPON A TIME ON THE LEFT

A house in the Berkeley Hills. A graduate-student sort of living room. A piano. The score of "Für Elise" open on the piano. Black-and-white family photographs. A library where I notice a history of the Russian Revolution, a memoir by Eleanor Roosevelt, an anti-aging handbook. Children's toys lying on the floor. A dog that keeps barging in from the garden and getting fussed over each time. And a woman, pretty but somehow plain, arms and shoulders too thin, a long shapeless blouse that hides her figure, glasses,



In France people debate whether prisons should be used for surveillance or punishment, rehabilitation or rectification. In America people mainly want reassurance that at every instant the separation of society and prison has been successfully carried out.

trick stores selling SUCK BUSH pins, T-shirts saying FUCK BUSH, postcards showing Bush dressed as a queen with wig, pantyhose, and garter belt, and the caption "Bush lied, thousands died." The trouble is that the only people here to laugh at all this are old homos with neat hair, white legs emerging from ironed shorts, silk ankle socks in high-tops, shirts that say VOTE FOR KERRY or POVERTY IS A WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION, looking actually as if they're disguised, almost more disguised than the drag queens they've come to applaud. They have the restrained laughter, the ultra-conventional bearing, of nice middle-class men out for a good time, average age about sixty; fear of AIDS, fear of sex—If we've escaped the wildness of our youth, it's not so we can succumb today to the vertigo of a remake; we'll go along with Reichenbach but use only blanks, as a matter of form, making sure to neutralize whatever liberating but dangerous effects that gay practices may have had in the

no makeup—the prototype of the eco-friendly Californian who makes it a point to play the part 100 percent naturally. I am in the home of Joan Blades, the lawyer—or, rather, the mediator—originally a specialist in divorce, and author or co-author of two popular books: *Mediate Your Divorce* and *The Divorce Book*. Six years ago she dropped everything in order to create, along with her husband, Wes Boyd, one of the most significant and innovative American alternative political movements in recent times. I am in the holy of holies where began the extraordinary Internet network that is at the origin of at least three large citizen mobilizations: The 2003 petition called "Let the Inspections Work," which was delivered by volunteers in person to all the congressmen and senators in the country. The thousands of phone calls imploring the same members of Congress to vote no on the \$87 billion Bush requested to finance the occupation of Iraq. And the huge campaign to get unregistered voters, especially

JOSEPH DE SCIOSE/AURORA

the youngest ones, onto electoral lists and out to vote. I am at the headquarters, in other words, of MoveOn.org, about which people have been talking to me ever since my arrival. But what exactly does "MoveOn" mean? What is it referring to, specifically? It's very simple, Joan Blades replies. It's 1998. We're in the middle of the Lewinsky affair. And we're so shocked—we, my husband and I, are so sick of this conservative offensive to put the president out of the running. And above all we can so clearly see the trick that allowed them, by amusing the crowd with a sex case, to avoid the real problems that should have been at the heart of any public debate worthy of the name. We're so deeply scandalized by this that I ended all my activities as a mediator and we sold the software company we had, and we devoted all our energy, all our time, and all our resources to launching the slogan whose full wording is not "Move On" but "Censure and Move On"—or, if you prefer, "Censure (President Clinton) and Move On (to pressing issues facing the nation)."

I understand. I have her repeat it, but I understand perfectly. The idea at the time was to destroy the Republican trap but also, in the same movement, to censure the Democratic president. The target was the special prosecutor Kenneth Starr and the campaign he was spearheading, but it was also Clinton himself, who in the view of so many Americans, including his political allies, had committed a genuine sin and thus deserved to be "censured." I am in the temple of American radicalism. I am in contact with what could be morphing into another New Left. I am in Berkeley, near Oakland, with the heirs of the great liberation movement born here in the sixties around Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and other Black Panthers. I am with resolutely modern people who know a lot about American cultural and social struggles, with unorthodox activists who, when they publish a book that is supposed to offer a fair image of alternative America, title it *Fifty Ways to Love Your Country*—in homage to the iconic "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover." What these activists are telling us, though, what they are conceding in the very name of their movement, is that in order to get a hearing, one had to say that Clinton was just slightly less guilty than his persecutors—that the sin shocked them just as much as the impeachment.

In the eyes of a European, this is absolutely astounding. These enlightened thinkers could have argued what some of them privately believed—that they thought that this business of the "stain" was a non-affair. They could have proclaimed that the president's sex life was his private affair, and that in any event it was out of order to let senators, congressmen, and the press have the least opinion on the subject. But no; maybe because they knew what they had to say in order to have credibility in America, they chose to call, all at once, for the American people to "move on" (out of the crisis) and "censure" (the licentious president). They put side by side the promoters of the new witch-hunt

and the venial sin that was its first pretext. These progressives, in the very act of founding their organization, ratified the keystone of conservative reasoning and thus let people think that here was a kind of axiom, an inviolable norm, a kind of prolegomenon for any political reasoning, present or future. As I say, to a European, this is astounding.

I am not, I should point out, intent on diminishing the merit of MoveOn. Nor do I know if its work even has a future—perhaps MoveOn is a seasonal product, the fruit of a passing moment in history. But one can see something here that is larger than the specific phenomenon itself. This detail that is in fact not a detail, this genealogical slip of the tongue, this way of having to stipulate agreement with the core of the opponent's premise—and, by doing so, lending it an evident theoretical advantage—says much about the form of American ideology. Joan Blades joked about it herself, when she told me about a postcard she had received from Australia: "Thank God you got the Puritans and we got the Convicts!" Moralism ... Puritanism ... The confusion of the realms of politics and ethics, which a democracy worthy of that name should keep separate ... A desire for purity ... Rigid moral standards and transparency erected as categorical imperatives ... Nothing new here, on this subject, for readers of Tocqueville, who will recognize some of the characteristics of the well-known "tyranny of the majority." The real surprise is in the facts, and especially in the oddity of a situation that was not foreseen, and in which we can witness the so-called tyranny vindicated, comforted, and basically legitimized by the very citizens who should have been its natural challengers.

THE ABSOLUTE PRISON

Alcatraz is the prison from which no one ever escaped. That is what literature tells us. That is what each and every movie inspired by Alcatraz tells us. They all have to do, to a greater or lesser degree, with this idea of impossible escape.

That is what the museum, which has occupied most of the island since the prison closed, tells us (for Alcatraz, too, has given in to the trend toward the museumification of everything).

And that is what the two Native American boatmen I met on Fisherman's Wharf, who agreed to take me to "the Rock" for \$250, tell me.

I try my best to get them to talk about something else. I try to question them about why Bobby Kennedy decided to close the most famous federal penitentiary in the country in 1963. I would like them to tell me more about the strange and beautiful story of the eighty-nine Sioux, Blackfoot, Mohawk, Navajo, Cherokee, and Winnebago activists who a few years later, in November of 1969, invoking American legislation concerning unoccupied federal territories as well as the broken but still valid old treaties that were signed after the victory of Red Cloud, offered, not with-

out humor, to buy back the island for a little more than the price the whites paid them, long ago, for Manhattan, and who established a kind of Indian commune there for nineteen months.

I would like, since they tell me, not without pride, that they are old citizens of San Francisco, for them to tell me all they know about the life of the prison, its system of punishment, its fiercest criminals: Al Capone, Machine Gun Kelly, and Robert Stroud, “the Birdman of Alcatraz.”

They could at least talk about what we see from the boat: the Transamerica Pyramid, standing tall on its anti-earthquake foundations; the Golden Gate Bridge, on our left, with its enormous pylons, its suspension cables that seem to be mocking heaven, its orange color made to glow in the fog; the baby seal who’s escorting us; the colony of sea lions on the shore behind us; the long-beaked pelicans, known as “Alcatraz birds,” circling over our heads.

But no. Nothing’s any good. Nothing interests them but incessant commentary about the records of this absolute prison. Nothing makes them happier than to tell about all those escape attempts, each one crazier, more fantastic, more inspired than the previous, not one of which ever succeeded.

Steering around the island, we find the enormous reservoir of water, mounted on pilings, that films have so often shown. We make out a building, gutted, which looks like it was a forced-labor workshop. We can see elements of the fortifications that appear to date back to when Alcatraz was just starting up—to the time when it wasn’t yet a prison but a fort, the first one on the Pacific, built to defend San Francisco. We can see a stairway that climbs up into emptiness; the barred, rusty framework of cells. Nearby would be the “hole” where the most intractable prisoners were isolated and sometimes forgotten. We recognize two white stone buildings, still in pretty good shape, where the supervisors must have lived. But my two guides have eyes, and voices, only for the lighthouse, the watchtower, the remains of the “gun gallery” from which the guards could shoot at fugitives; they become talkative only when we manage (at the risk of running into the rocks) to approach the half-effaced notice PERSONS PROVOKING OR CONCEALING ESCAPE OF PRISONERS ARE SUBJECT TO PROSECUTION AND IMPRISONMENT, and when, all excited, they can show us the ruins of the bakery that, they explain, allowed the prison to function as a self-sufficient system.

I wonder about this fixation.

I am surprised at the bizarre pleasure they derive from enumerating the names of fugitives recaptured (Fred Hunter, Huron “Ted” Walters, John Giles, Dale Stamphill, John Bayless) or drowned (Ralph Roe, the Anglin brothers, Theodore Cole) or killed by a bullet while in the process of escaping (Joseph Bowers, Thomas R. Limerick, Arthur “Doc” Barker, James Boorman).

And I wonder if there isn’t something at stake here,

something that touches on the very way America had, and perhaps still has, of conceiving its prisons.

In Europe—or, at any rate, in France—people debate whether prisons should be used for surveillance or punishment, rehabilitation or rectification. People reflect on the severity of the crime and of the punishment, and on the duration of the punishment and the hope for rehabilitation. Once those questions have been answered, and once it has been decided who should require and obtain justice, the person wronged or the sovereign power, one still has to think about the place of the prison in society and the chances that prisoners will have when they leave the former to reinsert themselves into the latter. In America the main concern seems to be the imperviousness of both worlds and the radicality of exclusion. The concern, the obsession, and thus probably everything at issue here involves reassurance that at every instant the separation has been successfully carried out and the two worlds have indeed been isolated.

The freezing water. The wind. The violence of the currents and the beating of the waves against the indented shore. The thick, cold fog that in the winter must isolate “the Rock” even more. The bay itself, so cheerful, so beautiful, which, when you consider it after Alcatraz, seems like a kind of Styx separating the world of the living from the house of the dead this prison was. Alcatraz is the completed form of what I saw sketched out on Rikers Island. It’s the confirmation of that conception of the prison as pure machine to exclude, enclose, and, in a way, purify. Not that Alcatraz is the only island prison in the world. Not that I’m forgetting Solovki, in Russia; Lipari, in Italy; Devil’s Island, in French Guiana—or even the Château d’If, in France. But Edmond Dantès escaped from the Château d’If. The Italian *confino*, harsh as it might have been, still shared an island with an ordinary community. But what happens here is that space itself is split in two, and this changes everything: it makes the prison the heart of another world. If it is true, as Foucault believed, that the Western penitentiary mentality oscillated for a long time between two rival models—of leprosy and plague, of power that excludes and banishes and the more modern power that knows, calculates, and in the end includes—it seems that Alcatraz represents the former. Prison as leper colony. To lock people up the same way you would draw a sacred circle. No escapees from Alcatraz, just the damned of Alcatraz and perhaps, beyond Alcatraz, of the American penal system as a whole.

ON THE ROAD TO L.A.

Highway 101. Then Highway 1, the legendary highway that follows the seacoast; I’ve seen it so many times in books that I feel I know it before I even take it. Warmth and speed. Desert. Sea sky. That Pacific Wall that Jean-François Lyotard spoke of, about which I no longer know if the mountain is the wall, or the cliffs over the sand, or even the immense, towering white waves that crash onto the beach. In Monterey the landscape suddenly

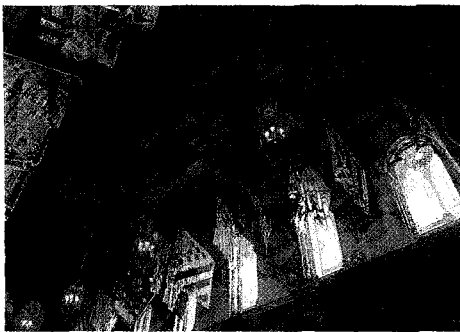
shifts to rounder hills, a coast of deep red, then green, then yet again red because of the kelp—a kind of deep-rooted seaweed, spread out over hundreds of feet, of which we see only the tips. But mostly one notices steep hillsides; sharp bends winding through the hillsides; well-defined cliff ridges, dotted with dwarf cacti in some places and giant redwoods in others; grandiose, jagged contours; huge masses and overwhelming skies; a scenery not of the end but of the morning of the world, where man may still be absent; and down below, in the other direction, more waves, the sun glittering in the waves, seals, the new, limitless luminosity of this inhuman desert that has thrown itself into the ocean. Lunch stop in Carmel Valley, at a bikers' restaurant, where we eat bad tacos and boiled corn on the cob that remain leaden in the stomach. Another stop, at a campground for RVs, where, in the torrid heat, a colony of white youths are playing. Everything about them—their trousers with the crotch falling down to their knees, the backwards baseball caps, the shape of their T-shirts, their slang, their tone of voice, their disaffected look—is trying hard to imitate black kids in American movies. A gas station in the middle of nowhere. A McDonald's,

branches, and meant, I imagine, to incarnate the suffering of the author of *Sexus*, *Plexus*, and *Nexus*.

And then, farther down the road, the Hearst castle, set on an arid mountain facing the ocean: San Simeon, bombastic kitsch, as big as half of Rhode Island, where I arrive full of emotion (wasn't this, after all, the model for *Citizen Kane's* Xanadu, the fortress of solitude where Orson Welles brought to life, and enclosed, his character?) but which I leave, an hour later, torn between irrepressible and contradictory wishes to laugh, to vomit, and yet at times to applaud.

Why laugh? The crazy image of those sleuths sent all over Europe to flush out an altarpiece the owner was mad about, or the 212th piece of a mosaic that was shattered ten centuries ago but that he wanted to restore, or, finally, a Greco-Roman temple he caught a glimpse of in a book and decided to buy, dismantle, number stone by stone, pack up, transport, and rebuild exactly as it was before.

Vomit? The predatory aspect of it all, the caprice of it, the almighty dollar, the cave-of-Ali-Baba side of it—the fruits of one of the most formidable enterprises of contemporary pillaging all stored in a jumble, your culture and mine. This



Why do I feel like applauding the bombastic kitsch of San Simeon? There's still a dream of civilization in the jumble of Hearst's collection, and a wish to make the beating heart of Europe, the archive of the Old World, live again here, in the wild heart of America.

at a turn in the road, where an American flag is flying listlessly and a billboard urges, SUPPORT OUR TROOPS. A farm where a roaming pack of coyotes was reported yesterday. A providential phone booth: after Monterey, cell phones can't get any signal. Needless to say, the least sign or detail of this sort, the least billboard (like the one in front of the phone booth, JESUS SAVES, COME TO US), the least Greyhound bus (all of which bring Ginsberg and Kerouac to mind), seems in this desert landscape miraculous, almost like a mirage. In Big Sur I discover, set back a little from the highway, in the woods, the humble memorial set up to the glory of Henry Miller by a literature buff: library; little museum; bookstore where anything that has to do, however remotely, with the author or his work can be found; in a clearing a movie screen on which a documentary will be projected in a few days; a platform, also out in the open, where the best "Miller scholars" in the country sometimes give lectures before a tiny audience of literature-loving locals; an old guitar-playing hippie; beneath a canopy of greenery and low-lying trees, on a pedestal of television screens artistically crushed and piled, a big crucified Jesus, made of wire intertwined with

is what I make of your memory: I buy and I stockpile, I steal and I heap up, move and possibly remodel as I please, as a world-renowned art lover. The world (of yesterday) was created in order to end up in my house; the most sumptuous collections (of artworks, objets d'art) are destined to find their way here, to this nowhere land, this temple of bad taste erected to my glory and to the glory of my mistress, the actress Marion Davies. On his good days William Randolph Hearst must have thought he was making these works live again, that he was offering them a new baptism. On his bad-humored days he must have told himself that the Europeans were dwarfs, subhumans, and that he had the supreme right to walk over, sit down, shit on all that heritage they were so ridiculously proud of.

But why in the world do I feel like applauding, too? Just once won't hurt; there's virtue in mixed feelings—for despite everything, he had a love of these works. There's still a dream of civilization, and—in the very act of placing on the same level an ancient marble bust and a fifteenth-century statue, an Italian Venus from the twentieth century, a Moorish Spanish ceiling, and the Venetian glass tiles in

the pool—a desire (pathetic certainly, but touching, and which could have borne a certain nobility) to make the beating heart of Europe, the archive of the Old World, live again here, in the wild heart of America. The ark of another Noah saving all these things from who knows what obscure disaster: perhaps—who knows?—the great European catastrophe. But the animals have become objects, and species have been changed into masterpieces, each one unique.

At nightfall, the coconut palms of Santa Barbara. The cascades of flowers in Santa Monica. Melancholy palm trees in a Riviera-like landscape. And very quickly, without forewarning, a scene of wide rectilinear avenues, lit up like nowhere else in the United States, phosphorescent, from which I deduce that I have entered Los Angeles.

THE ANTI-CITY

A city is like a text, Roland Barthes once wrote. Just as there is a language of dreams, so there is a language of cities, more or less well articulated, more or less elegant or legible.

I wonder, then, if the prototype of a city with a poorly developed language, the prototype of unintelligible, illegible discourse, isn't Los Angeles.

For after all, what must be true for a city to be legible?

First, it has to have a center. But Los Angeles has no center. It has districts, neighborhoods, even cities within the city, each of which has a center of some sort. But *one* center, *one* unique site as a point of reference for that law of isonomy the Athenians believed was the principle behind every city, a hub or focus with which the inhabitants of Beverly Hills, Hollywood, Venice, Chinatown, Koreatown, Little Saigon and Little Tokyo, Malibu, Inglewood, Pico Union (and I could go on, since Los Angeles officially numbers eighty-four neighborhoods, where 120 languages are spoken), could have a relationship at once distinct and regular—nothing like that exists in Los Angeles.

Second, it has to have a border beyond which it dissolves or breaks apart. But Los Angeles has no border. Along with Tokyo, it is the limitless, indeterminate city par excellence. Or if there is one—if there is, necessarily, a space that is the city proper and another that is not yet the city—the property of this border is that it is undetectable, impossible to determine or situate. I looked out for it when I arrived from San Francisco. It's like the border that separates night from day, or day from night, about which I swore to myself every night, and every morning, when I was a child: "There, that's it, I'm going to trap it, I'm going to keep my eyes wide open, and this time I won't miss it"—but no, I failed, every time I mysteriously failed. Night fell, day broke, and once again I had missed the instant of transformation—just as here I missed the borderline of Los Angeles, this burgeoning city that goes on indefinitely, interminably stammering, a huge slow animal, lazy but silently out of control.

Third, it has to have a vantage point, or several, from

which it can, as in the Paris of Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, be embraced with a single glance. But is it because of its gigantic size? The immensity of the five counties—Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, Los Angeles—over which it is spread? The fact that the County of Los Angeles alone, with its nine million inhabitants (17 million in greater Los Angeles), extends more than fifty miles from east to west and sixty from north to south? Is it this precocious horizontality, the product of earthquake threats, which so clearly distinguishes it from New York and Chicago? Is it the smog, the smoke and fog, that envelops it for most of the year and makes it one of the most polluted cities in the country? The fact is, these viewpoints do not exist. There is the classic vantage point of Mulholland Drive, of course, but nowhere can the traveler find a place from which the city in its entirety can be the object of this panoramic gaze—Hugo likened this gaze to "the flight of a bird"—that alone would qualify it as a city. There are other viewpoints: the U.S. Bank Tower; in the east, the Gas Company Tower; in the west, next to the Spanish Steps, the 444 South Flower Street building; in the south, the First Interstate World Center, which, with its seventy-three floors, is the tallest building on the West Coast. But again, from none of these buildings is Hugo's cavalier gaze possible. From none of these heights is the city as a whole perceptible. From Griffith Park's observatory you can see to the horizon in all directions—at least when the air is clear; but Los Angeles itself extends beyond the horizon in a blur. And I realize, as I reflect on this and gather the few memories I have of arriving by plane in Los Angeles, that not until you see it from the sky is the same image offered, from whatever direction you're approaching, of a city that isn't just formless but also elusive. I see that because it is always identically illuminated as far as the eye can see, as in the opening scene of *Mulholland Drive*, it has the singular quality of systematically concealing itself from the double grip of the eye and the intelligence.

Finally, a legible city has to have a heart, and this heart must be pulsating. It has to have, somewhere, a starting point from which, one feels, the city was produced, and from which its mode of production is still intelligible today. It has to have a historical neighborhood, if you like, but one whose historicity continues to shape, engender, inspire, the rest of the urban space. But this place, too, is nonexistent. In Los Angeles there is nothing like the old neighborhoods from which you feel, almost physically, that the European cities, or even New York, have emerged. They do show me the old neighborhood. Kevin Starr, the excellent California historian, takes me not far from Chinatown, to Olivera Street and Old Plaza, which are supposed to be the nucleus of what was once called El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles. But they are dead places. It's a neighborhood frozen in time. However much Starr leaps from house to house, with his considerable bulk proving surprisingly agile, with his ink-blue too-warm suit and his bow tie that makes him

look like a private eye out of Raymond Chandler, to explain to me how gargantuan Los Angeles was born from this tiny seed; for all this, something isn't right. You don't feel any possible common denominator between this stone museum, these relics, and the vital, luxuriant enormity of the city. And the truth is that with its pedestrian islands and its restored façades, its profusion of typical restaurants and its stands selling authentic Mexican products, its wrought-iron bandstands, its cobblestones, the varnished wood of the Avila Adobe, which is supposed to be the first house in the neighborhood, this street makes me think of all the fake "heritage towns" that I keep running into in America.

For an illegible city is also a city without a history.

An unintelligible city is a city whose historicity is nothing more than an ageless remorse.

And a post-historical city is, I fear, a city about which one can predict with some certainty that it will die.

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE OBESE?

Of course there are obese people in America. Of course there is a physical obesity that is often seen as a metaphor for a more general obesity that affects cities, businesses, the hubris of politics and finance.

And yet ... Is there really as much of it as they say there is—and, especially, as much as anti-American literature claims there is?



Ever since my arrival in America I have kept my eye out for those notorious clusters of fat people featured in European tabloids. Now I find myself at a weight-loss clinic, here in Los Angeles, one of the leading establishments in the battle to the death against obesity.

And isn't this matter of obesity more complicated than the caricature of it, including, of course, the American caricature?

Ever since my arrival in America, in all the little towns I've gone through, I have kept my eye out for those notorious clusters of fat people featured in European tabloids. Perhaps I didn't look carefully enough; perhaps I traveled through the wrong places; but I didn't spot many more fat people here than in any provincial French town.

I read the American statistics meant to alert public opinion to this new epidemic, which is supposedly in the process of overtaking smoking-related illnesses as the leading preventable cause of death in the country. I read a study this very morning that explains, in the emphatic "state of emergency" tone the press loves to use when it declares

war on crime, drugs, terrorism, or, now, obesity, that the proportion of officially overweight people in America has just risen above 65 percent, while 30 percent of Americans are classified as obese and that number is increasing and will continue to increase by at least five percent a year. I trembled. I thought ahead. Like all readers of the study, I could envision a time when, at this rate, 100 percent of the population would be afflicted by the virus—until I noticed that the method of calculation used, the well-known BMI (body mass index, which measures the relationship between height and weight), places the bar so low that if the same measure were applied to many European countries, roughly the same percentage of people would be affected.

I looked at other statistics, alleged to show the correlation between obesity and mortality; I read the studies of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (what a name!) and the American Obesity Association (which calls, flat out, for the institution of "fat taxes" like the taxes levied on tobacco); I read all the government investigations of obesity, investigations whose comparative alarmism is such that it reduces AIDS to the rank of a flu epidemic. But I also read studies from Cornell University and the National Center for Health Statistics; I read a study by Glenn Gaesser, a professor at the University of Virginia; I read an essay by Paul Campos on the "myth" of obesity; and I've been told that there are experts who, not content with questioning the previous studies, not content with denying a cause-and-effect relationship

between the increase of BMI and mortality, demonstrate, for instance, that overweight nonsmoking white men die from cancer less often than non-overweight subjects.

In short, lost in these arguments and numbers, no longer knowing what expert to turn to—and incapable of reaching a decision in the other, connected battle over the responsibility of junk food, or of McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Burger King, and Wendy's, for this degenerative transformation of American bodies—I end up going this morning to the Lindora weight-loss clinic, here in Los Angeles, which is said to be one of the leading establishments in the battle to the death against obesity. I interview Cynthia Stamper Graff, Lindora's president and CEO: dark-green suit, red hair, artificially perfect smile, forehead smoother than nature, photos of Reagan and Thatcher over her desk. Did she know

them? No, but she admired them, she said. Wasn't it after they left office that this epidemic began? It could hardly be pure chance, was the implication, that the most famous of America's overweight people, Bill Clinton, became president soon after. I look with her at the other pictures mounted on the walls, "before" and "after" photos of some of the "big losers." It's suddenly unclear to me whether they went through this clinic or the NBC reality show *The Biggest Loser*. I interview one of these "losers," Traci Smith, thirty-six years old, 488 pounds on arrival, who can't say enough about how much her life has changed since she entered the system. She is only one of many who, each year, for about \$1,200, begin by taking a ten-week course of treatment in one of the thirty or so centers belonging to the company. Especially after meeting Traci, after seeing this newly thin woman who has strangely kept all the gestures, postures, ways of walking and thinking—in short, the entire fate—of a fat person, I think I understand two or three things.

I understand, of course, that there is a weight-loss business that is gaining on the junk-food business.

I understand that the former has an advantage over the latter in being able to rely on the prestigious testimonials of science and medicine.

Even better, I understand that inventing obesity—that is to say, claiming first that being fat is a disease, second that this disease must be treated, and third that it will never, despite treatment, be completely cured—creates a type of dependence that is at least equal to that produced by the inventors of flavors, fragrances, and packaging that are designed to develop a loyal following among junk-food consumers.

So we can't put the blame on junk food, fly to the rescue of citizens intoxicated by the new engineers of taste, support them in the lawsuits they are bringing, for instance, against McDonald's, unless we add right away that they are the guinea pigs of not just one but two competing lobbies—one having the advantage over the other for having discovered a regime that is almost more restrictive.

Big Brother once again. No longer a cop but a doctor in everyone's body. Worse than a doctor, a statistician, imprinting his implacable orders onto the quick of live flesh.

Will we end up penalizing the fat?

Will we forbid them access to food deemed harmful?

Will we put scales at the cash registers of fast-food restaurants, to weigh people before selling them Super-Sized Happy Meals?

And will we see, thanks to these new norms, the return of forgotten attitudes that existed during Prohibition?

We know well the mechanisms at play here. How, starting with the control over bodies, one imperceptibly reinforces control over society. How, beginning in Europe, the medical establishment lent a hand to the political establishment by offering procedures of examination, classification, diagnosis, evaluation.

The United States has reached that stage—later than Europe, but making up for lost time. It's the last of those "open medical governments" that Foucault, in *The Birth of the Clinic*, amusingly contrasted with Fichte's closed commercial State—and in which he saw one more decisive step forward in the history of servitude.

ONE FLEW OVER THE MIGRANTS' NEST

The helicopter rises high up, very high, heading first toward the ocean, then into the sun, inland.

On one side the suburbs of San Diego, California's second largest city, the last one before the border crossings at San Ysidro and Otay Mesa, where 30,000 pedestrians, 65,000 cars, and, in all that crowd, hundreds if not thousands of people without papers attempt to pass through every week.

On the other side Tijuana, its Mexican twin city, more widespread than I had imagined—grayer, too, dirtier. Endless parking lots that look like cemeteries, the flames of rubbish heaps on the outskirts of the city. Cars so dusty they seem to be dried-out chunks of mud. Rare dapples of color—an old colonial house, the remnants of a zocalo—that are all that survives of the quaint little village that numbered barely a few dozen houses a century ago.

And between the two sides, dividing the shore, the stockade fence that, seen from the sky, looks like a long black sheet of metal eaten away by rust. It is lined with a sort of barred grille, not very high, which on the Mexican side has been spray-painted with skulls; one panel of the fence is inscribed with the names of those who have died trying to cross. To my great surprise I see that the fence extends just a hundred or so feet into the ocean and that its other end stops abruptly, less than fifteen miles inland.

How come? I ask the pilot. Less than fifteen miles for a border that's 2,000 miles long? Is this the famous separation, the scar, the border between two worlds, the wall of shame and death, that American left-wingers and Mexican human-rights NGOs compare to the Iron Curtain?

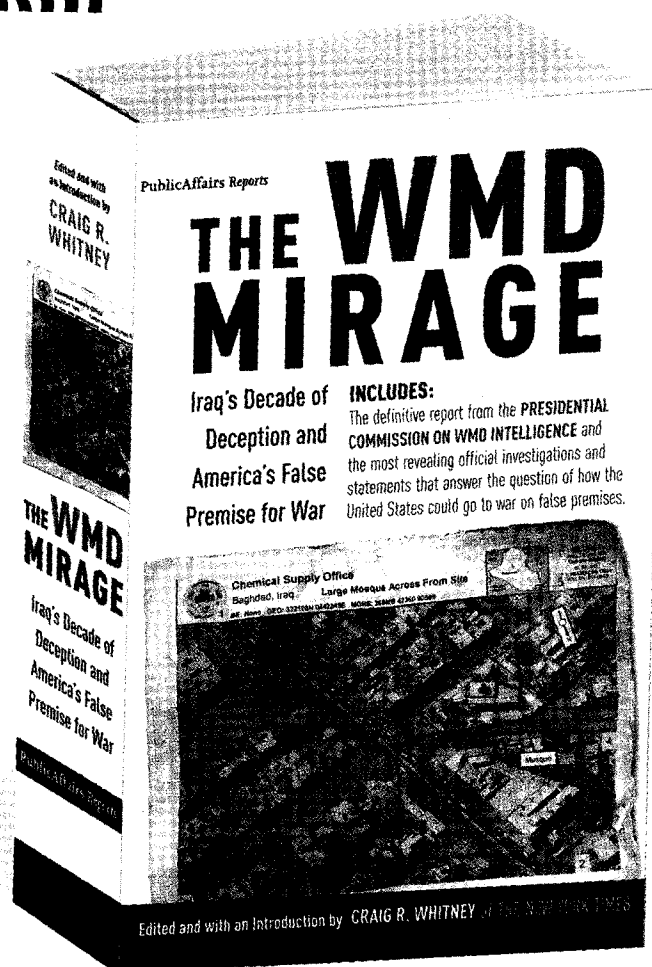
"Well, yes," he replies. "There's no need for more. Nature takes over the job soon enough—you'll see ..."

A cloud of dust lifts up at that instant. A whirlwind of red earth clashes with a whirlwind of white earth, which blinds us and causes the helicopter to sway. "If you need to throw up, tell me," he shouts through my headphones. "Don't be shy, tell me—I'm the one who gets landed with cleaning up later."

When visibility returns, I discover below us a landscape that has been virtually transformed—first marshes and then, very quickly, bare mountains and hills. No more ranches. No more maquiladoras, those American-funded factories that use Mexican labor and have migrated to Mexican territory, hugging the border. The river becomes a thin stream and then disappears altogether. Little white crosses, from time to time, on top of hillocks. The dry, parched land, which looks now like scales, now like huge brown slabs. The scorching

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heat that comes in through the door. Not one bridge to cross the steep ravines. We are over the Imperial Valley desert, which does truly seem to serve as a natural barrier.

The pilot, at my request, begins to descend for a closer look, and to approach the *linea*, visible on a GPS display. He explains that the Mexicans will react immediately, and, if we get too close, will order us, over the radio, to resume our altitude.

Same attempt, farther north. Silence this time. We hover for a while and then circle around and observe our black shadow rolling over the scorched plateaus.

Another helicopter appears, which for a second I think is coming to accompany us back to the base. But that's not the case: it's a helicopter from the Border Patrol, taking over from a patrol SUV that found a group of Mexicans looking for a nighttime passage up a dried-out riverbed—but this happens on the Mexican side, and thus out of the Border Patrol's jurisdiction.

How many people are out there who, like those Mexicans, are preparing for the great leap into the unknown?

How many kids ready to brave the SUVs, the helicopters, and then the desert to escape poverty?

We won't see any more of them during the remaining two hours of our flight.

We'll see other SUVs, winding their way over invisible dirt tracks, or parked like wild animals lying in wait and gathering their strength before they pounce—but no more potential travelers.

But the numbers are there. There are, I know, hundreds of thousands of people every year who entrust their fate to unscrupulous "coyotes" who take their money and then sometimes abandon them halfway. There are hundreds of people who, here in the desert, die the most inhuman of deaths, dehydrated, their skin burned, their brains cooked, burrowing into the searing sand to find a cool place to die. Faced with these two kinds of borders, one has to wonder if it might not have been more rational, more effective, and on the whole more humane to lengthen the fence—and if so, why is it not done?

Money? The prohibitive cost of construction that would extend for more than 2,000 miles, from San Diego to Brownsville? It's hard to say if that would cost so much more than the thousands of new gatekeepers they've just been authorized to recruit, or more than the radar and the infrared or seismic detectors provided by the Pentagon that are designed to reveal suspicious movements.

Image? The negative publicity that a continuous iron fence would generate for a country that Thomas Paine said should be a land of asylum for all humanity? Perhaps. But that, too, is not so definite. For the image of those border patrols, supported by organizations of citizens, which expend so much energy, imagination, and science to organize a hunt for illegal immigrants, is certainly no better.

So I wonder if there isn't, above all, an unconscious

perversity in the current arrangement, a Mexican-American version of "The Most Dangerous Game." I wonder if there isn't in this very incompleteness an implicit, and cynical, way of saying to the Mexican prey, "Go on—give it a try. I'll give you one chance; try to find it, and if you find it, take it."

Or, even more perverse, it is the hypocrisy of a system that, as everyone (in California and elsewhere) knows, needs these illegal immigrants. They are the fuel for its economy, and its very lawyers—in principle its most zealous guardians, the star players and standard bearers, who, like the former congressman Michael Huffington, seem to be the most hysterically intent in their public speeches on reinforcing border patrols and crackdowns at the border—are in general the first to be caught red-handed hiring illegal immigrants themselves, for their own private use. A cunning system, then, that gives itself a way of having them without wanting them, and thus of controlling both the flow and the cost of this Hispanic proletariat that is as necessary as it is undesirable.

I don't like any of these explanations. And yet ...

HOW TO BECOME AMERICAN

"Don't you find it difficult, as a Hispanic, to be on the front line of this hunt for illegal immigrants?"

And then: "What do you say to the Mexicans you arrest when they accuse you of being a *tejano*, a traitor to the race, a false friend?"

Angel Santa Ana stiffens. The chubby face of this young officer of the San Ysidro Border Patrol suddenly becomes purple.

"I am an American," he replies. "An American first of all. And I'm doing my duty as an American."

Then, regaining his composure: "It's true that by ending the fence they're only encouraging people to keep going and to take horrible risks ..."

He points out on the wall behind him a yellow metal sheet that looks like a highway road sign and on which are simple pictures representing a snake, a man drowning, a sun, and steep mountains, accompanied by the warning ¡CUIDADO! ¡ZONA PELIGROSA! ¡NO ARRIESGUE SU VIDA! ¡NO VALE LA PENA! in big black letters.

"It's also true," he continues, "that a part of me understands these people. I have a kind of admiration, or at least sympathy, for them. That's what I tell my men when they arrest one of them. I order them to listen, to talk with them, and especially to sympathize, since we have so much to learn from these heads of families who have taken such risks to come to this country. But at the same time, what do you want me to do? You have to obey the law. And I'm here to uphold the law. Come on, *vamonos*, I'll take you into the field ..."

I look at him at the wheel of his SUV, winding his way over the scorched road that runs alongside the fence. He is frowning, his face tense and serious, watchful, the look of a lawman in the process of turning into a hunter.

When we stop, twenty miles farther on, surrounded by mountains, I observe his demeanor: a scout on the lookout for his prey. "It's a science," he explains, "tracking down illegal immigrants. The golden rule is never to have the sun behind you. But if I keep it in front of me, if I'm facing the sun, then nothing can escape me. The smallest trace of a footprint in the dust, the slightest rustle of grass, alerts me—I know all the signs!"

I listen to him tell me stories of the thousand and one tricks of these people he knows so well—no one in the world knows them better than he does, Angel Santa Ana, whose own family was here, he hints, a generation ago, maybe two, crossing the same border, feeding the same dreams, and taking the same terrible risks that filled him with admiration and sympathy. I listen as he, strong with the twofold knowledge acquired from family memory and the U.S. Border Patrol Academy, tells me about all the ruses of these poor people he is hunting today just as, probably, his own people were hunted before. A child chained beneath the chassis of a car. A woman acrobat who managed to press herself into a space under the hood. A tunnel that began under a billiard room in Mexico and ended up in the stairway of a house in Arizona—that takes years! These people have an incredible imagination! But we know all the tricks they can dream up, and that's why, in the end, we're the ones who win out ...

What does win out here? Sympathy or law enforce-

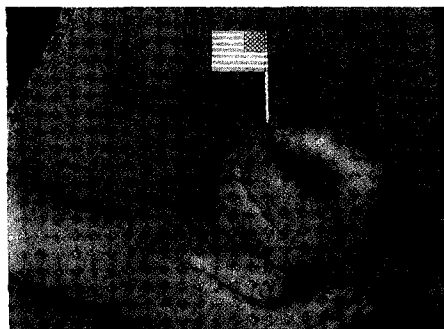
to consider only the superficial effects of the arrangement, two elements emerge.

By recruiting only agents who speak Spanish, or those willing to learn it—by choosing a form of positive discrimination that in a country like France would be unthinkable—you demonstrate that Hispanics can hunt other Hispanics, you emphasize that *la Raza* is neither a unit nor a tribe, and, paradoxically, you put a wedge in American communitarianism.

And by allowing people like Santa Ana to suggest to the *desesperados* of Tijuana that merely wanting to be American isn't enough (for that, in the end, is what they are doing); by making them spell out that America has to be earned, and that American citizenship is not a gift but a conquest; by setting them up as guardians of the terrible Stations of the Cross their own people have already followed, in tears and blood, not one stage of which can be skipped over today, perhaps they are also maintaining, no less paradoxically, the ancient forms of a desire for America that is as old as the country.

For I see two patterns of immigration in California—and, I believe, in the United States today.

The Korean, Armenian, Iranian, and Chinese immigrations, which maintain newcomers in established economic and cultural cocoons that merely communicate with other cocoons and no longer generate the desire for integration so pervasive in past eras.

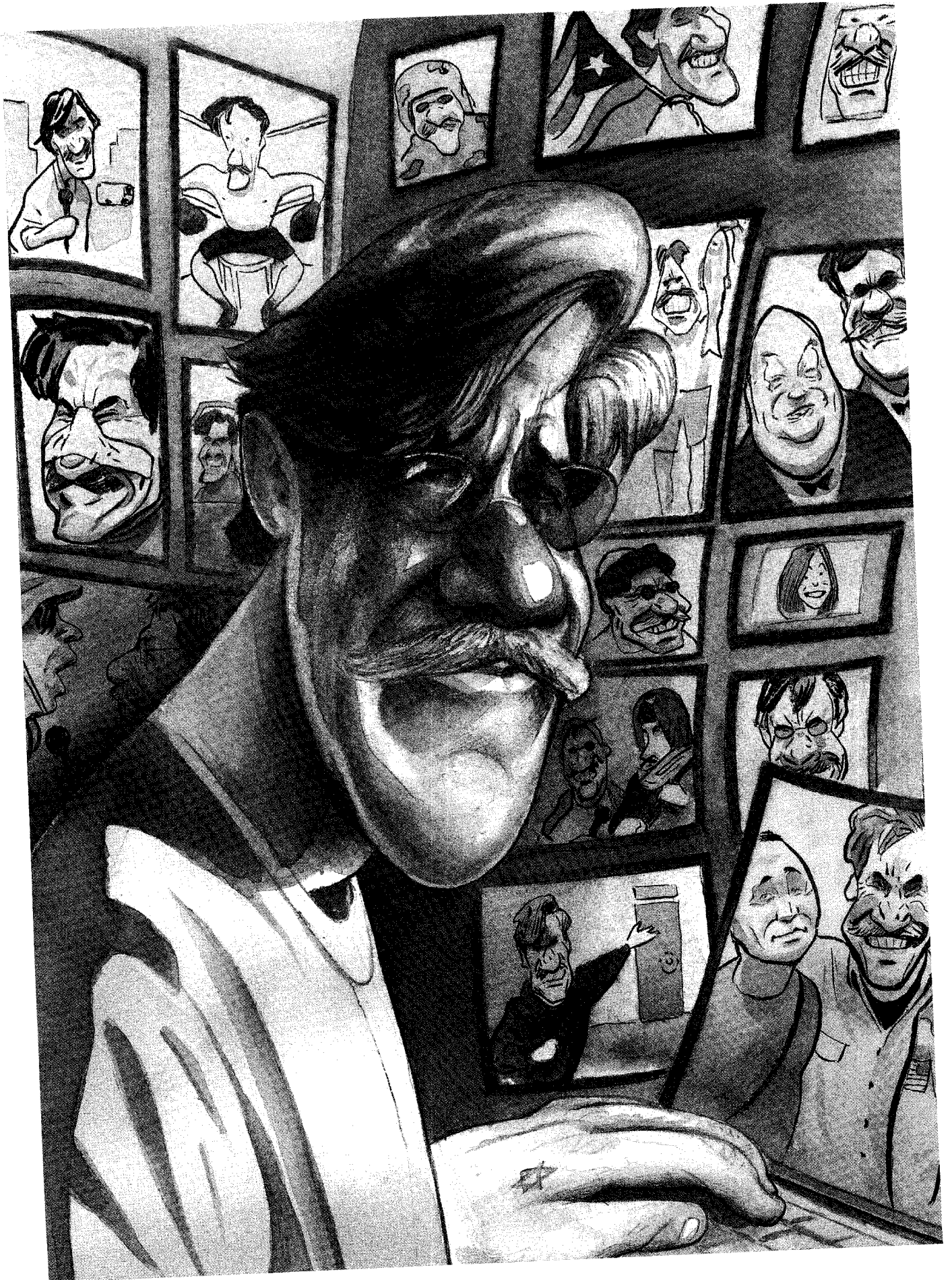


We hover for a while and then circle around. There are hundreds of people who, here in the desert, on the U.S. border with Mexico, die the most inhuman of deaths, dehydrated, their skin burned, their brains cooked, burrowing into the searing sand to find a cool place to die.

ment? The sensitivity of someone who's been through all this, and who can't hide the obscure tenderness that seizes him when he arrests an illegal immigrant who reminds him of his parents? Or is it the other reflex, also classic, which consists in closing the door behind him precisely because he's been there, and doing so with even more spite because he knows all their tricks? Hard to say. I suppose both possibilities are true, and that each case depends on the circumstances. I also suppose that there is in the situation itself the source of a thousand crises of conscience, when officers, shattered, torn apart, no longer know if they should serve their family or their country. But I'm certain about this: if you put all these questions aside; if you overlook the psychological aspect; if you make an effort, above all, not to think for even an instant about the death and the suffering that are the real cost of these fine phrases, in order

And then this kind, the Hispanic kind, which places its participants in a situation that is structurally not so different from that of immigrants of long ago, who, once they had passed through the filter of Ellis Island, once they had let themselves be deloused and examined to verify that they weren't syphilitic, still had to endure a generation of labor and sweat before they deserved to be truly American.

At that time it was "First papers, then sweat." Whereas today it is "First sweat, and later on, if all goes well, papers." But the structure is there. And along with it, this invariant of "becoming American," which is complicated, painful, caught in the patience and frenzy of things, solitary, for a long time uncertain. In Europe newcomers often arrive with a sense of entitlement. In America newcomers take nothing for granted. For them, America is a place that must be earned. ▀



BEING GERALDO

*Yes, he knows exactly what he is. But he still can't help it.
(And anyway, it's not quite what you think)*

BY SRIDHAR PAPPU

Illustration by Steve Brodner

.....

On summer evenings the Boat Basin at Seventy-ninth Street, on the far western edge of Manhattan, hums with the primordial fears and ambitions that fuel the city itself. People stumble out of the nearby open-air restaurant and bar to stare across the Hudson, looking condescendingly at the shores of New Jersey, happy to be here in the capital of the world. Young Wall Streeters, faces rosy with alcohol, quietly ponder whether their long hours are worth it. Couples make promises to each other that won't last till August—which is fine, just fine, for the moment.

But in winter the restaurant is closed and shuttered, and the basin is a cold and forlorn place, devoid of life save for a few dock employees and compulsive joggers. No sane person would choose to be there. Yet there I found myself one day in mid-December, trying to keep warm, looking for a man whose face millions of people know, but whose essence and motivations remain mysterious: the lawyer-turned-journalist-turned-talk-show-host-turned-journalist Geraldo Rivera.

You would be hard pressed to find a sentient adult in America who does not know who Geraldo is. Like Madonna and Kobe, Martha and O.J., Hillary and The Donald, Geraldo has achieved single-name status—he is fully absorbed into the warp and woof of our time. He is a cultural phenomenon and often, it seems, the punch line to some pop-culture joke. But he was also once, and now aspires to be again, a newsman and a serious journalist. He broke major stories as far back as thirty years ago, and there is no more fearless war correspondent around. This is hard to remember, however, when seeing footage of him having fat from his buttocks injected into his forehead, or contending with brawling neo-Nazis on his talk show, or vainly searching “Al Capone’s vault” for two hours on live TV, or promising to personally kill Osama bin Laden, or simply strutting and preening and boasting the way he does. Some smart, prominent people (Harvard professors, high-powered lawyers, distinguished journalists) who know Rivera well call him brilliant—and yet he can't seem to escape the larger-than-life circus act that is “Geraldo.” So I had come to the Boat Basin on this frigid day, when he planned to put

his thirty-six-foot jet-powered Hinckley away for the winter, to see if I could begin to figure out what lay behind Geraldo the Pop-Cultural Phenomenon, and whether there might, in the end, be redemption for Geraldo the Reporter.

A little after noon Rivera appeared at the end of the dock. Unlike some television personalities (Katie Couric, Jon Stewart), he looks in person exactly as he appears on the screen: muscular, with wildly windswept graying hair. Thanks in part to an intense daily workout that would debilitate most people (including me—I tried it), he appears two decades younger than his sixty-one years. And then there's his signature moustache, so prominent a beacon that it stands out even from twenty or thirty feet away.

Rivera planned to leave his boat in a New Jersey marina run by his friend Chick. So with me as his crew (evidently he likes to subject reporters to nautical experiences), we cruised down the Hudson toward the Atlantic Ocean. Steering the boat—named *Belle*, for his daughter Isabella—while drinking a Sam Adams, Rivera pointed out some landmarks from his life: Chelsea Piers, where the parents of his current wife, Erica, threw the rehearsal dinner for their wedding, in 2003; sitting on the ground alongside a ferry dock, the giant clock that was removed from the shuttered Colgate Palmolive plant in Jersey City, where his mother was born and raised; and the Parachute Jump at Coney Island, where his dad proposed to his mom after the ride had gotten stuck, leaving them suspended in midair. As we approached the Sandy Hook channel, he warned me that the relative calm of the Atlantic would soon pass. The northwest winds were bad, he said, and the ocean would be choppy.

He was right. Water began to splash off the bow; it seemed there was a real danger the boat would submarine, or that it would get hit broadside by a huge wave and capsize. As the winds broke in from seemingly every direction, Rivera's grip on the joystick tightened, and he handed me his beer so that he could concentrate.

“Can I have some of this?” I asked, clinging to the side of the boat with one hand and the Sam Adams with the other.

“Sure,” he said. “Help yourself.”

Sridhar Pappu is an Atlantic correspondent. His article on the advice columnist Amy Dickinson appeared in the January/February issue.

The beer was warm, but I finished the bottle in two swigs. Rivera whistled gaily, and joked that the waves were cleaning the front of his boat. I tried to imagine that I was tucked safely under a blanket in my Brooklyn co-op, far away from the violently pitching *Belle*.

Mustering a coherent sentence with great effort, I asked, "Is this a typical ride?"

"Yeah, it's typical," he said. "Typical of my life."

One of Rivera's most surprising qualities is his self-awareness: at every moment, at every stage of life, he seems to know exactly where he is. Of all the people I've interviewed, Rivera is the best at knowing when he's at the top of his game, when he's down, and when he's sunk. At this point in his career, he will freely say, he is at neither the top nor the bottom. He is no longer a dashing contrast to the slow and deliberate Hugh Downs and Barbara Walters, on ABC's *20/20* (which is what he was in the early 1980s), and he is no longer CNBC's official anchorperson for the O.J. Simpson murder trial (which is what he was in the mid-1990s). Nor, however, is he dodging flying chairs, or appearing on television in bed in his bathrobe (both of which he did on his daily talk show in the late 1980s and early 1990s). He is in a kind of career stasis—a condition perhaps not uncommon for those fortunate enough to have more than two acts in American life. Now on his fifth wife and in at least his fourth or fifth professional incarnation, he is a war correspondent on Rupert Murdoch's Fox News, a self-described liberal at what many consider to be the official news network of red America. He is not a signature part of the network; it doesn't promote his show the way it does Sean Hannity's or Bill O'Reilly's. *At Large With Geraldo Rivera*, the show he anchors on Saturday and Sunday nights at 10:00 P.M., is, Rivera acknowledges, "nothing." "It's hard to be a show of record," he says, "when you're on weekends."

Yet Rivera chose to be here, relinquishing millions of dollars and a nightly platform on another cable network in order to do so. For seven years before coming to Fox he was the anchor of *Rivera Live*, a highly rated nightly news-talk show on CNBC. But on 9/11 he was in Malibu, and when he saw the Twin Towers go down, he went over to NBC's Los Angeles bureau, where he was told that his services weren't needed at the moment—his show was being pre-empted for the night because his arch-nemesis, Tom Brokaw, would be simulcast on NBC and CNBC. Rivera spent the next several weeks pleading with the NBC brass in New York to send him to Afghanistan, or at the very least Jerusalem. He was incensed. He wasn't Ashleigh Banfield, for God's sake: he'd covered Cambodia and Chile, Laos and Lebanon; hell, he'd been in Afghanistan after the Soviets invaded, in 1980. But the network, which had already dispatched much of its news staff to Afghanistan, told him to stay put. A little over a month afterward, saying that he refused to be marginalized,

he used an exit clause in his contract and took an initial \$3 million pay cut to sign on as a war reporter for Fox. With his signing came his pledge to kill Osama bin Laden—and to bring his head back to the United States, to be bronzed.

"Osama," he said to me one Saturday night, sitting in the largely deserted Fox newsroom before *At Large With Geraldo Rivera* went on the air. "That's the story. I can't tell you how many caves we crawled into looking for that sucker."

"We'll go back to Afghanistan," he said. "One more Afghanistan trip, because of all the unfinished business. I just want to go crawling around there one more time."

"You promised to—" I said.

"Kill him if I see him?" Rivera said, interrupting. "I will, I will."

"And bronze his head," I added.

"Those things are so outlandishly Geraldo," Rivera said.

As both of us laughed, he said, "I don't care."

I asked him whether he had made his Osama pledge for effect, or really meant to deliver on it. "They won't let me carry a gun, so what am I going to kill him with?" he said. "A Swiss army knife?"

But when I brought the subject up again a few weeks later, Rivera seemed very serious. "I would still shoot him," he said. "I *will* still shoot him. They won't let me carry a gun. But I should have just carried a gun and fucked everybody."

Rivera hasn't always been so "outlandishly Geraldo"; he hasn't always been "Geraldo" at all. The son of a Jewish waitress and a Puerto Rican dishwasher, Gerald Rivera was the first member of his immediate and extended family to graduate from college. At Brooklyn Law School, where he went after college, one of his classmates was Gerald Shargel, who is now a powerful defense attorney. Shargel recalls coming home from class and telling his wife, "This guy Gerry is the smartest guy I ever met." Rivera did extraordinarily well, winning a Reginald Heber Smith fellowship, awarded to the most promising law students in the country who aspired to practice public-interest law. In the late 1960s and early 1970s he worked at Community Action for Legal Services, in Manhattan; there he gained attention representing the Young Lords, a radical Puerto Rican activist group along the lines of the Black Panthers, who established many community programs but sometimes resorted to intimidation. Once, when a church in Spanish Harlem refused them space in which to serve free breakfasts to neighborhood children, the Lords seized control of it; on another occasion they occupied a hospital they claimed was providing substandard health care to Latinos.

At the time, the legendary Al Primo, who is generally credited with inventing the format now ubiquitous in local TV news, was the news director for ABC's local affiliate. Watching Rivera speak about the Lords to the press, he saw great on-air potential, so he offered him two things: a chance to go to a summer program at Columbia's journalism

school on a fellowship, and a suggestion that he always use the Spanish version of his first name: Geraldo. Rivera asked Herman Badillo, a prominent lawyer who would go on to become the Bronx borough president and the first Puerto Rican representative in Congress, what he should do. "Go into television," Badillo recalls telling him. "We didn't have any Puerto Ricans on television at that time. He would be the very first one. And I knew Geraldo was very aggressive, and that if he found a way to be a reporter on television, he could find a way to get to be known."

So after finishing the Columbia program, Gerald was introduced to the world as Geraldo when he went to work for ABC's *Eyewitness News* in New York. In 1972 he used a stolen key to investigate the Willowbrook State School for the Mentally Retarded, on Staten Island. His televised report on the rampant abuse and neglect of the residents led to changes in state law, and to new standards for the treatment of the mentally disabled across the country. More than thirty years later his Willowbrook story is still legendary among advocates for the retarded.

"That seems so long ago, in a way," Rivera says of his *Eyewitness News* days. "In some ways what I do now isn't all that different from what I was doing then. It kind of gets all muddled together. I get my decades mixed up now. I just can't remember not being Geraldo."

Willowbrook made Rivera a national star. He began hosting the ABC News magazine program *Good Night, America* and then became part of the inaugural cast of *Good Morning, America*. The night David Berkowitz—"Son of Sam"—was arrested, in 1977, Roone Arledge, the president of ABC News, called on Rivera to do eighteen minutes on the capture. And as part of the original cast of *20/20*, Rivera helped pull the show out of the ratings depths, with investigative pieces and interviews with Fidel Castro, Jimmy Carter, John Lennon. His fame and fortune grew. During this period he was, by his own account, reckless and "a slut" in his personal life.

But that chapter of his life—the *20/20* part, not the slut part—ended in the fall of 1985, when he objected too loudly to ABC's decision to spike a story by his colleague Sylvia Chase about Marilyn Monroe and the Kennedy family. Rivera publicly chastised Arledge, saying his boss was acting out of friendship with Ethel Kennedy rather than sound journalistic judgment. His contract was not renewed.

Today Rivera owns lots of houses and even an island—so it's hard to imagine him in need of money. But by the end of 1985 he was. He had been making \$1.2 million a year at ABC (while spending, by his own reckoning, \$50,000 a month), and suddenly he had no income and, for a while, no good job offers. So when he got a call about doing a special on Al Capone's vault—the mysterious sealed crypt beneath the shuttered Lexington Hotel in Chicago, where Capone used to live—he jumped at the opportunity. Even though Capone's vault famously turned out to be empty, Rivera's

professional prospects actually improved: the program, which aired in April of 1986, was the highest-rated show in the history of syndicated television. So he followed it with similar specials, including *Devil Worship: Exposing Satan's Underground*, which in 1988 became the highest-rated two-hour "documentary" ever on network TV.

Meanwhile, in 1987, Rivera's daytime extravaganza, the *Geraldo Rivera Show*—known as *Geraldo*—made its debut. For an audience used to the quiet tones of Phil Donahue, Rivera seemed to tear apart the airwaves. His topics included "Wanted: Elvis! Dead or Alive," "Drag Queens on Parade," "Exploring Satan's Black Market," "Sexual Secrets ... To Tell or Not to Tell," and "Teen Lesbians and Their Moms." And those episodes were all in one week! Then there was "Young Hate Mongers": that's when a skinhead referred to a black guest as an "Uncle Tom," producing a melee in which a hurled chair broke Rivera's nose. As Donahue begat Oprah, Geraldo begat Jerry Springer and Montel Williams and dozens of other trash-TV knockoffs—something he deeply regrets.

"Osama," Geraldo said to me one Saturday night. "That's the story. I can't tell you how many caves we crawled into looking for that sucker." Rivera has promised to kill bin Laden and bring back his head to be bronzed.

"I was sick of it," Rivera said recently of his decision in 1997 to leave the daytime talk-show format. "Maury Povich was my neighbor [in New Jersey], and he and his wife, Connie Chung, are two of the nicest people you'd ever want to meet. I saw his show just a couple of days ago, and it was all paternity tests and lie-detector tests, all stuff that I pioneered, and I look at that stuff now, and I know how smart Maury is, how sensitive he is, and for him to still be doing that—humiliating all those poor trailer-trash and mostly black people, Hispanic people—I don't know how you do that, how you bear that. I could not do that no matter how much you pay me. [My daytime talk show] was like a money tree growing in the back yard. It still could be on. But I couldn't do it. I couldn't face myself. I couldn't walk out there and pretend it had any social justification. It was just exploitation."

In 1991 Rivera published an autobiography called *Exposing Myself*, in which he detailed his sexual encounters with (among many others) Margaret Trudeau and Bette Midler, and recounted an anecdote about arriving at the bar mitzvah of the Hollywood mogul Jerry Weintraub's son with two hookers. He was taken aback by how many

people felt hurt by the book. Publishing it, he now says, ranks up there with crossing Roone Arledge among his greatest personal and professional mistakes.

Chastened by the response to *Exposing Myself*, and souring on his own talk show, Rivera was saved when Andy Friendly, a cable-TV executive and the son of Fred Friendly (a legendary journalist and media executive who had mentored him early in his career), recruited him to CNBC. Roger Ailes, who took over the network in 1993, completed the negotiations, signing Rivera up to do an hour-long nightly show that focused on the news of the day. Within months of *Rivera Live's* debut, O.J. was cruising down a Los Angeles

freeway in his white Bronco, a trail of policemen following behind. During both the criminal trial and the civil one that followed, *Rivera Live* was effectively the show of record; all the case's principals (prosecutors, defense lawyers, legal experts, Nicole Simpson's family, prominent commentators—everyone except O.J. himself) appeared on the program. The JonBenet Ramsey mystery followed, and soon *Rivera Live* was bringing in the network's highest ratings, besting both the news program hosted by Brokaw-in-training Brian Williams and *Hardball With Chris Matthews*. Rivera's soaring viewership even began to worry those at CNN, who feared that the moustached marvel might overtake Larry King.

When Ailes was hired to launch Rupert Murdoch's new all-news network, in 1996, he tried to lure Rivera aboard. Rivera was tempted, but NBC wanted to keep him and made it worth his while (or so he thought) to stay. He got a \$6 million salary; the chance to host, in addition to his regular show on CNBC, an earlier evening-news program called *Upfront Tonight*; and the opportunity to produce four documentaries a year for NBC. He would also serve as a legal analyst for the *Today* show, and (he hoped) potentially for *Dateline* and the *Evening News*. He wanted to be "the anchor of the next millennium."

Things didn't go as planned. Though he interviewed Bill Clinton in China for *Today*, and reported from Kosovo, he was always kept far away from Brokaw, who by all accounts wanted nothing to do with him or his approach to newsgathering. (In 1997 Brokaw told *The New York Times*, "He does what he does, and I do what I do. There's very little common ground between us.") To compensate for the snub, Rivera says, NBC gave him an office bigger than Brokaw's—though of course "mine was in Fort Lee, New Jersey, and his was in Rockefeller Center." *Upfront Tonight* was eventually canceled; and when Rivera reported on air that a source had disclosed to him that genetic evidence had been found on Monica Lewinsky's infamous blue dress, the rest of the division was told to ignore the story, on the grounds that it was mere innuendo.

"Show me someone who had more," Rivera says of the semen-stained-dress story. "I was the person who had the information about the DNA. We broke so much on the impeachment story, and it was overlooked—NBC's loss. It was Brokaw. It was Brokaw. He may be the most noble of creatures, but he was as ungracious as you could possibly be with me."

The day following our tumultuous voyage on the *Belle* ("There's always a near-death experience with Geraldo," his wife, Erica, later told me), I arrived at Rivera's house—or, rather, houses—in the seaside co-op colony of Riverside, New Jersey. The first house, which has a dock and an elaborately appointed gym, is where Rivera and Erica (who was then newly pregnant) live. The second house is for Rivera's four children from previous marriages. A third house is being built, mostly of glass; it will have its

ISHI

Ishi, the last of his tribe,
walked out of the forest.
He was dying of starvation.
A home was found for him,
the Anthropology Museum,
and harmless occupations.

He helped the hospital nurses
clean their instruments.
He showed Professor Kroeber
his tools: a pot for cooking,
a rope, a basket,
a bow and arrow.

*

Ishi liked to walk to town
and ride the trolley.
Kroeber took him to the opera.
Instead of watching the show
Ishi turned his chair around
and looked at the crowd.

The first airplane he saw
made exploding noises.
"American man go up
in sky," he said, and laughed,
like an ancient Roman,
not to be astonished by anything.

*

Ishi died of tuberculosis.
He was buried with five arrows,
"some things of a personal nature,"
and left the noisy world
as quietly as he came,
taking the forest with him.

—LOUIS SIMPSON

Louis Simpson received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1963. His most recent book is The Owner of the House: New Collected Poems 1940–2001.

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own swimming pool, and will serve as a guesthouse. Though the houses individually appear relatively unassuming from the outside, the complex as a whole is far from modest. The decor of the main house, which was originally a bachelor pad (Rivera bought it while in the process of separating from his fourth wife), resembles the interior of Captain Nemo's submarine. This house, the one closest to the water, is full of exotic artifacts, including knives and masks from Latin America, Africa, and Asia; in a detached garage Rivera keeps two 1954 Jaguars. Soon, he explained, the third floor would be converted into a nursery for the new baby, with the weaponry removed.

Geraldo's talk-show topics included "Wanted: Elvis! Dead or Alive," "Drag Queens on Parade," "Exploring Satan's Black Market," and "Teen Lesbians and Their Moms." And those episodes were all in one week!

After taking me on a tour, Rivera sat at his desk, speaking to his producers—Christina Timothy and his brother Craig—about his show for the coming weekend. The night before, he had received a call from Michael Jackson's camp, asking if he wanted to cover a children's-charity event the pop star was throwing at Neverland in two days. Rivera was leaning toward going. (He has subsequently promised to shave his moustache if Jackson is found guilty in his current trial.) He rejected an idea about pursuing a piece on the disgraced Homeland Security nominee Bernard Kerik—unless they could get an interview with the man himself. No Scott Peterson, Rivera said. He was sick of the case (although he would be open to doing a segment in which someone would describe what Peterson could expect on death row). And there should be plenty of Iraq, he said, with reports from three locations across the region. "Just go balls-out on Iraq," he told Christina and Craig. Soon he would be headed there himself.

For better or worse, Rivera does not avoid difficult situations; in fact, he moves toward them. I spent several hours in the office of Craig Rivera, who for thirteen years was a senior correspondent on *Inside Edition*, watching tapes of his brother covering war zones. The footage often shows Rivera, a black bandanna around his neck, running straight into—not away from—gunfire. In Somalia, where he and Craig had gone in search of al-Qaeda operatives, they found themselves in the midst of guerrilla fire. When Rivera walked toward the source of the shots with his arms in the air, declaring that he was an "Americano" in the hope, evidently, of ending the firefight, he was met by

another volley that finally forced him to retreat. Footage from Afghanistan, where a Humvee in his convoy hit a landmine, shows Rivera sprinting toward the downed vehicle, yelling, "I've got to help. Please let me help, man."

"I'm not going to tell you again," the military commander traveling with the convoy yells at Rivera. "I need you back and over here. Look, I need you back over here. You can film it, but I need you back over here."

"I'm not afraid," Rivera told me later, as he diagrammed his approach to combat on a paper tablecloth. "If you're going backwards, you tend to be standing straight up. If you're going forward, you're a much lower target. This guy [the backpedaler] is much more likely to get it than this guy [the forward-creeper]. That's always been my theory. And with my crew I almost lead them. It's like this barrier of guys coming behind me. Horatio Nelson, Lord Nelson, always said, the captain cannot do far wrong who lays 'his ship alongside that of his enemy,' and that's always been my advice to any journalism student. Nothing happens in a studio. You have to get out there and get as close to the action as you can. That's where history is made: at the point of contact."

Because reporting is such a personal matter for him, Rivera responds viciously to questions about his methods or his fact-gathering.

On December 6, 2001, soon after arriving in Afghanistan, he and his brother traveled through the hills of Tora Bora, where the United States was carrying out combat operations against the Taliban. Rivera heard of a friendly-fire incident that, he was told, had happened close by, and he filed this report for Fox.

We walked over what I consider hallowed ground today. We walked over the spot where the friendly fire took so many of our—our men, and the *mujahideen* [anti-Taliban fighters], yesterday. It was just—the whole place, just fried, really, and bits of uniforms and tattered clothing everywhere. I said the Lord's Prayer and really choked up.

There was a problem, however. As David Folkenflik, who at the time was a reporter for the Baltimore *Sun*, subsequently revealed, the friendly-fire incident Rivera referred to had actually happened in Kandahar, hundreds of miles away—not on the "hallowed ground" he was walking over. Rivera responded that there had been confusion—that he had actually been at the site of *another* friendly-fire incident. Folkenflik, who now covers the media for National Public Radio, reported that in fact, yes, there had been a friendly-fire incident in Tora Bora—but, according to Pentagon officials, it took place three days after Rivera filed his report, and it involved only Afghan soldiers, not U.S. troops. Fox News and Rivera both called the matter an honest mistake, but he remained livid. Rivera accused Folkenflik of "penis envy" and eventually met with Folkenflik's editors at the *Sun* to show video evidence of what he had seen at Tora Bora. When Folkenflik was awarded the \$10,000 Paul

Mongerson Prize for Investigative Reporting on the Media (sponsored by the Washington-based Center for Media and Public Affairs and the University of Virginia Center for Governmental Studies), Rivera publicly demanded that the award be taken back, to no avail: the award stood.

“What [Rivera] tried to do was turn it into a referendum on my reporting as opposed to his own,” Folkenflik told me. “He had talked about wanting to break my nose. I mean, it’s amazing to see a guy go on *Regis* and *The O’Reilly Factor* and talk about this, but he straddles this world between celebrity and journalism, and he has the venues to do it to get what he wants.”

Though more than three years have passed since the incident, Rivera still refers to Folkenflik’s reports as “the most grievous wound.” He says his biggest error was not going after the *Sun* immediately after Folkenflik had filed his reports.

“I believed that the Baltimore *Sun* reporter was despicably unethical,” Rivera told me. “I got back after Tora Bora, first of all bitterly resentful, because I should have had a fucking parade. Nobody was braver. Nobody was more out front than us; nobody got more than us or was deeper with all the fighters. Nobody pegged the Osama story more clearly than we did. Nobody. Nobody. Instead I came back to the bullshit controversy.”

“I have video,” he continued, “that I think can prove in a court of law by any test that it was a friendly-fire incident that I came across at Tora Bora, and that I had confused it with the one that had been reported.”

A little more than a year later, in March of 2003, Rivera was embedded with the 101st Airborne Division in Iraq. After two hours of reporting, Rivera was told he needed to come up with something for another Fox program. What he came up with was this: during his on-air report he drew lines in the sand, outlining where his division was located and where it intended to go.

Rivera was pilloried in the media for giving away American troop movements, and accused of compromising security. At the insistence of the Pentagon, Fox temporarily withdrew him from Iraq. NBC and MSNBC—which had been compelled to fire its own correspondent, Peter Arnett, a few days earlier, for criticizing U.S. policy in an interview with Iraqi television—declared in a promotional ad that their reporting would never “compromise military security or jeopardize a single American life.” There was no doubt what the ad was referring to.

Today Rivera deems the incident “total bullshit,” calling it a “non-story” generated by a single spokesman at the Pentagon. Indeed, he says, his drawing was far less revealing than the graphics that former generals, sitting alongside the network anchors in New York, used to detail the military’s plan of attack. And Rivera points out that when he returned to Iraq, a week after the incident, he was welcomed back by the same unit he had supposedly put in danger.

“Attacks like this are more illustrative of the people who

hate me than they are any way of me—because action talks and data walks,” he told me. “That’s why I said [the CNN anchor] Aaron Brown would shit in his pants if he had been in some of the places I was. That’s true. That’s absolutely true. It’s the same way about all of them—every one of those Geraldo detractors. How many times have you been shot? How many times has your car been blown up? How many times have you ever been winged? How many times have you gone into it, taken a gulp, and stepped out of the airport?”

Rivera cheerfully admits that he’s a hard man to kill—both literally and professionally. So while Peter Arnett sulks in the tomb of former-war-correspondent obscurity, joining the likes of “Scud Stud” Arthur Kent, Rivera has managed, as Robert Evans might say, to stay in the picture.

Rivera’s brashness is less pronounced in real life than it is on TV, and it dissipates even further over time, especially when he’s with his family. Spending the days before Christmas with them in Puerto Rico, I saw the Rivera family as less Brady Bunch than X-Men—some kind of social-psychology experiment gone terribly right. Four children from three different mothers, along with one young wife, they are a group of disparate individuals who have no particular reason to get along, but are drawn together by something. That something, of course, is Rivera. His oldest child, Gabriel, twenty-five, lives in Lake Tahoe and works with computers; he had brought along his girlfriend, currently in graduate school at UCLA. His son Cruz, seventeen, attends boarding school in Portland, Oregon. The two girls—Isabella and Simone, twelve and ten respectively—would meet up with the group later.

Erica, the fifth Mrs. Rivera, is a pretty, dark-skinned thirty-year-old who grew up in the Jewish bastion of Shaker Heights, Ohio. The daughter of a labor lawyer and an educator, Erica Levy went to New York in her early twenties, with a degree from the University of Wisconsin and experience in business television; she landed a job at CNBC in 1998. Two years later she met Rivera through friends, and on their first date—dinner at Café Luxembourg—she fell in love.

Twenty-five at the time, leading the usual exhausting New York romantic existence, she had been on countless dates, never really liking anyone. But that night she was powerfully drawn to Rivera, who is thirty-two years her senior. And he was a persistent suitor, sometimes calling five times a day. Before long Erica had moved out of her three-person share in Murray Hill and was living with him in New Jersey.

Telling her folks back in Ohio what she was doing was not as easy. The response was certainly understandable: outrage and heartbreak and concern from parents who had sent their daughter off to Madison in hopes she would meet a nice Jewish boy and settle in Cleveland, only to have her move to New York and fall in love with a four-times-married fifty-seven-year-old. Erica, they said, *what are you doing?* Three months passed. Finally, one morning, Erica and her father,

who seldom fought, exploded over the phone. That day she went to work, and that night her folks called, saying they had watched *Rivera Live* and had agreed with what Rivera said. They asked if they could come to New York to meet him. According to Rivera, he and the Levys became “instant best friends.” And so two years ago Erica entered Manhattan’s Central Synagogue in a strapless Vera Wang wedding dress to join Rivera for, perhaps, the rest of his life.

When I brought up the assertion of his fourth wife, C.C. Dyer, that he is simply “incapable of being faithful” to anyone, Rivera said, “That certainly has been my story. But not now. I’ve been clean and sober [sexually speaking] for four years, and I’ve had a million opportunities, obviously, being on the road, especially being in Asia. But I’ve been studious about it. I figure, I’ve got a thirty-year-old wife—why am I going to be greedy about it? I’ve finally given it up. Socrates was free of it at eighty. I was free of it before Socrates.”

Incidentally, Dyer’s comments about Rivera’s unfaithfulness—and about everything else—were made with deep affection. “He’s the world’s best ex-husband,” she told me.

THE TATTERED DRESS

The day the royal court came through our village—
many drums and flutes, grandfather monkeys
with faces like fists and jewels the size of fists,
each elephant its own tree of blossoms,
a tiger on a leash, a pair of peacocks—

the old Emperor did not choose me:
he chose my delicate sister. Our poor family
shrieked and clapped and pulled their hair, thinking,
plenty rice each year. And what does *she* think,
in the Emperor’s lap, inside the palace walls?

I did not put away the beautiful clothes
but wear them out among the buffalo,
wear them out in the field, in the standing water,
the filthy water that breeds our meat and drink,
my bent back a flash of scarlet and gold

that scatters the ducks and aggravates the swine.
Why not? Do I have some other calling?
The dull human oxen point at me:
one-almost-chosen: what
the lesser gods thought I could withstand.

Their judgment, too, I can withstand.

—ELLEN BRYANT VOIGT

Ellen Bryant Voigt is the author of six books of poems, including Shadow of Heaven, which was a finalist for the National Book Award. She lives in Vermont.

And Rivera, for his part, says that his relationship with Erica was able to work only because it started almost a year after his final separation from Dyer: “None of the women that existed before the dissolution of the marriage could have been my partner, because C.C. would not have tolerated it. And C.C. is in some ways closer to me than my siblings. I wouldn’t say she’s my best friend, because of Erica, but those are my two best friends.”

The first day of our visit to Puerto Rico, Rivera, his son Cruz, and I drove from a plush resort in the northeastern part of the commonwealth to Salinas, a town on the southern coast, off which Rivera had bought his own private island. Driving past rain-forest-like vegetation, we spoke about George Pataki (whom Rivera likes a lot); about Dan Rather, his favorite anchor, who has always—unlike Brokaw—been friendly to him; and about his own career. Iraq was getting too dangerous, he said, and he wanted his next trip to be his last. He loves Afghanistan, unlike Iraq—particularly the people. “Once they commit to you, once they give you a cup of tea or do work for you, they would die for you. There’s amazing pride and loyalty and dignity—much more so than any Third World or undeveloped country. They’re the coolest poor people on earth.”

Rivera’s island, twenty-five acres big, lies three miles off the coast from Salinas, and is under federal protection. Certain plants can’t be touched, he told me, and no concrete can be used in the buildings he’s planned. That’s all right, though. Soon enough a three-story “floating home,” powered by its own generators, will dock next to the island. It will be as big as his home in New Jersey, and it, too, will have its own gym.

The island looked like a construction site—from 1836. Five or six workers were building a wooden gazebo, while a couple more were drilling through to a spring that will provide fresh water. There will be a big stone barbecue pit. Rivera—with his shirt off and tied around his waist, revealing tattoos on both biceps—pointed to the future site of his hammock. Wooden bridges are all over the island, leading to various beaches, where dead coral will be removed to uncover soft white sand. There will be a sunset beach and a sunrise beach and, at the center, a wooden watchtower. “I’m really a hippie at heart,” Rivera said. “I’d love to live on my island and look like Howard Hughes and have the kids come and pick the lice out of my hair.”

Back on the main island, Geraldo, Cruz, and I settled in for a late-afternoon lunch outside at a restaurant by the water. Next to us a family waited for their meal. The mother was a tall woman with blonde hair and long red fingernails. The father was a heavysset man with a ruddy complexion. Two young boys ran around the table, while the parents glanced frequently in our direction.

Finally the mother said, in Spanish, “You look like Geraldo.”

"Prepare to be dazzled."

—MALCOLM GLADWELL, author of *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*

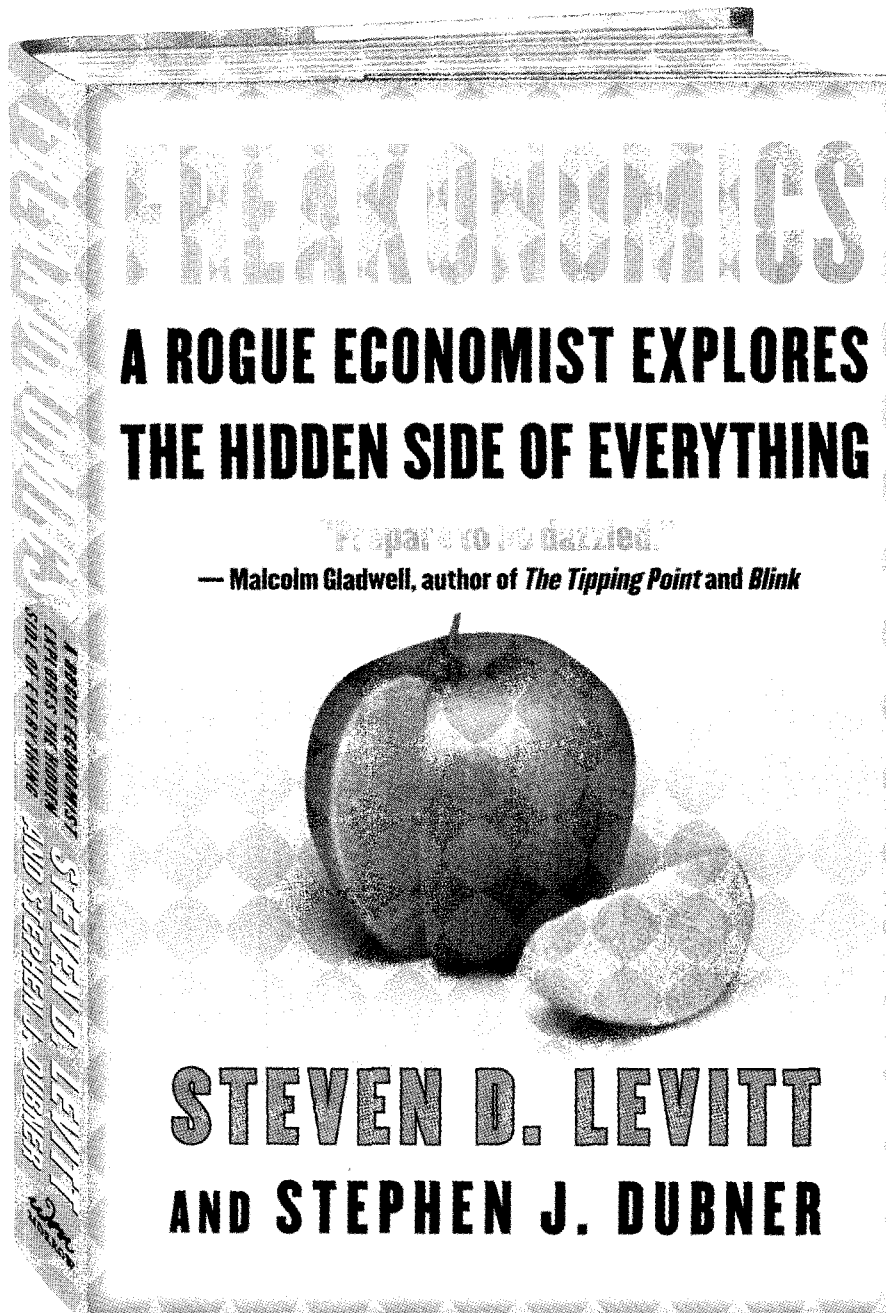
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Speaking for his father, Cruz said, "He is."

The father told Rivera that he was one of the Young Lords that Rivera had represented in New York in the late 1960s. The man, now a merchant-vessel captain, was heading out on a trip to Portugal that evening.

"I was a socialist then," he said, in English.

"We all were socialists then," Rivera said.

"I was a junkie, too," the man said.

"Coming down here cleaned you up?" Rivera asked.

"No," he said, "I did it on my own."

After the family ordered us another round of beers, the man said, "You are an example to us all."

"You know," Rivera said to me not long ago, "I still feel like ABC was where my natural place in life was. Those fifteen years I grew up there. Many New Yorkers still associate me with *Eyewitness News*. Not that I dominated *20/20*, but I was one of the headliners there, and if I was still there, I think that whole network wouldn't have had the kind of problems they've had. I hate to talk in cosmic scope, but that was my natural place. Everything else has been a follow-up in some ways."

We were sitting in a restaurant on the Upper East Side, warming ourselves with Bloody Marys over brunch while the city recovered from a blizzard. Johnny Carson had died in the early hours of the morning. A couple of days earlier Rivera had hosted an inaugural ball in Washington

"Aaron Brown would shit in his pants if he had been in some of the places I was. That's absolutely true. It's the same way about all of them—every one of those Geraldo detractors. How many times have you been shot?"

for wounded soldiers (the soldiers had voted to have him be the host). On his way to meet me he had dropped off his daughters at Dyer's house. That night he would be leaving for Iraq. You know those times when you step back and curse yourself for not marrying that girl when you had the chance, or for not telling off your cousin at your father's funeral? As we talked, Rivera seemed to be experiencing one of those elegiac moments.

"We never had dinner [after my departure from ABC]," Rivera said, speaking of his old boss, Roone Arledge. "But I remember once—it was funny—in the men's room of the Columbia journalism school, where we were doing the Fred Friendly memorial [in 1998], and I was giving an address, and I ran into Roone, and we just stood for five minutes, and it was regretful and conciliatory."

Rivera's departure this evening would mark his sixth trip to Iraq since the U.S. occupation began. Though he agrees with President Bush that the insurgency will eventually die down, he said he felt queasy about this trip. He described the insurgents' capacity for violence as simply "awesome."

"But on the other hand, my going there is a giant fuck-you to [the insurgents]," he said. "They know that I go. They all have cable TV. They know I bring this bravado. These concerns I'm voicing to you—I don't express them on TV. So I go swaggering in there. 'Here I am—fuck with me if you can.' And the GIs get a tremendous kick out of it. I'm going to pump them up at every place we stop. To do my best at any place I stop, and I'll sign as many autographs as I can, do as many 'Hey, Mom's as I can. In a sense it's my duty."

C.C. Dyer says that Rivera gravitates to war zones because he didn't go to Vietnam. "Geraldo tried to avoid the Vietnam War, and I think he's always felt guilt-ridden about that," she told me. "And subsequently he's tried to cover every war since then." I doubted that Rivera would share his ex-wife's assessment. But when I put the guilt theory to him, he readily agreed. "You're damn right," he said of his avoidance of Vietnam. "I felt guilty; there's no doubt about that."

"I was totally against the Vietnam War—I hated the war," he told me. "The war sucked. But John Kerry served, and he hated the war too, and somebody else went instead of me. And I felt guilty about it. That's how I feel about this trip to Iraq, so I can come full circle. How can I not go and make someone else go?"

Rivera says this act of his life will soon end. He has a newborn coming in August. His contract with Fox will end in November. He has one more four-year deal left in him, he told me, after which he'll have a kid starting school. Ideally, he says, he would like to return to television in the vein of Howard Stern, with a daily television-cum-radio show.

"I think this next contract could be my biggest news contract unless I fuck up between now and the summer, and I don't intend to," he said. "Fox has first dibs, but the problem with Fox and me is they're wildly successful. Where are you going to put me? Who are you going to knock out? Every single slot is filled. From three o'clock to eleven o'clock they've got a hit show. Where would they put me? I don't know ... But I know wherever I go—I could go to the lamest cable network, I could go to Court TV, I could go to Trio, I could go to Bravo—make one up, and I know my show will do respectably against the competition. And I know that. And they know that. In a sense I'm like a franchise ballplayer at the end of my career. I'm like Randy Johnson or Roger Clemens. That's who I identify with: old guys who still can throw ninety-five-mile-an-hour fastballs."

"It's just like Johnny Carson dying," Rivera said. "Johnny Carson snubbed me all those years, never putting me on the show. You know, Brokaw retired, and I'm going to outlive every one of them. I'm going to outlive all of them. That will be my ultimate revenge." ▀

THE FLIRTY DOZEN

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

.....

"The Pentagon considered developing a host of non-lethal chemical weapons that would disrupt discipline and morale among enemy troops ... among the plans was one for the development of an 'aphrodisiac' chemical weapon that would make enemy soldiers sexually irresistible to each other ..." —Newsscientist.com

"What do you have for me, Colonel?"

"Sir, this is the preliminary report on the field test of Agent Mauve."

"Remind me."

"The aphrodisiac weapon?"

"Right—proceed."

"It's highly sensitive."

"Give it to me straight, Colonel."

"Testing was conducted on an unwitting platoon from the 75th Ranger Regiment."

"Damn fine unit."

"Yes, sir. Rangers lead the way. Hooah, hooah. Each man was administered a single dose of Agent Mauve with his morning MRE. The unit was then instructed to take and secure a strategic objective. A bridge."

"Yes?"

"There were difficulties getting the men to deploy."

"What sort of difficulties?"

"They refused to mount up until they were satisfied with the application of their facial camouflage. The major in command told the colonel in charge ... his exact words were 'Cool your jets. I look like Joan Crawford in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*' G-2 indicates it was a reference to a movie. One of Ms. Crawford's later movies, in which her physical appearance was not flattering."

"I never liked this whole program. And?"

"Eventually the war paint was to the major's satisfaction. Operation proceeded and the bridge was secured."

"Very good."

"At this point they mounted a—uh—runway show. Sir."

"Ran away? Rangers? Impossible."

"No, sir. 'Runway.' It's a fashion-industry term. The individual—that is, the clothing model—walks up and down on a horizontal platform approximately two meters wide by thirty meters long in a sexually provocative manner. The hips swivel laterally at a seventy-five-degree angle to the pelv—"

"Got it, Colonel."



"Sir. The counterassault was initiated by elements of the 101st Airborne and the 10th Mountain Division."

"And?"

"Counterassault was ineffective."

"Are you telling me the finest paratroop and light infantry units in the United States Army were repulsed by sexually disoriented Rangers staging some, some kind of a *fashion* show?"

"The Agent Mauve seems to have maximized the unit's esprit de corps. I have the after-action report here. Shall I ... ?"

"Yes, yes—read. This isn't the same Army I joined."

"No, sir. 'Counterattack was initiated at 0620 hours. Red Force, consisting of two sticks of the 101, were dropped from a C-130 and took up offensive positions. Blue Force, consisting of two units of the 10th Mountain, opened the assault. Mauve Force—that would be the Rangers—engaged the Red and Blue Forces with (underlined) furious resistance. They were apparently very upset over their uniforms' being hit with paint pellets from the attackers' weapons. It was at this juncture ..."

"Out with it, Colonel."

"... Mauve Force began returning fire with live ammunition."

"Good God. Casualties?"

"No casualties, sir. They fired over the heads of the attackers. However, that did cause Red and Blue Force to retire *from* the exercise with urgent dispatch."

"This is a disaster, Colonel. Of the first magnitude."

"That would be my assessment as well, sir."

"It is well that war is so terrible, or we should grow too fond of it. Do you know who said that?"

"Robert E. Lee, sir?"

"Yes. Robert E. Lee. Bobby Lee. My God, he was handsome. Mounted on Traveller, with his gray tunic, the buttons, dress sword flashing in the sun. What's that odor?"

"Sorry, sir. There was a loose seal on the sample. Some Agent Mauve appears to have leaked onto the report."

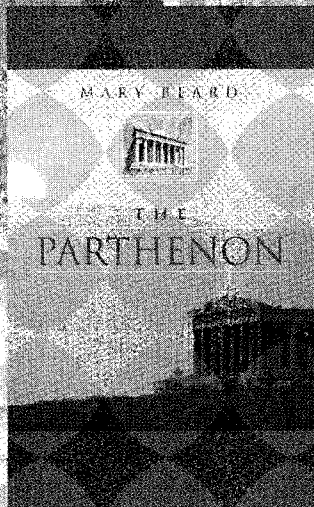
"No, don't apologize. 'Colonel'—is that your first name? You have really nice shoulders. So, are you ... regular Army?" ▀

Christopher Buckley is the author of eleven books, including the novel Florence of Arabia, from which excerpts were drawn for the September and October 2004 Atlantics.

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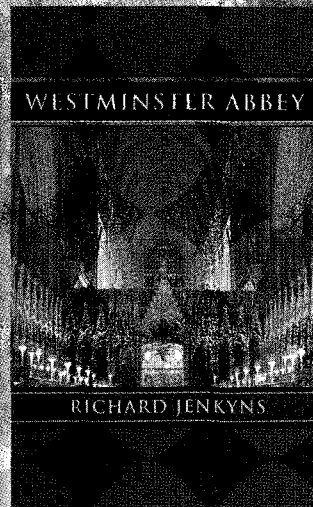
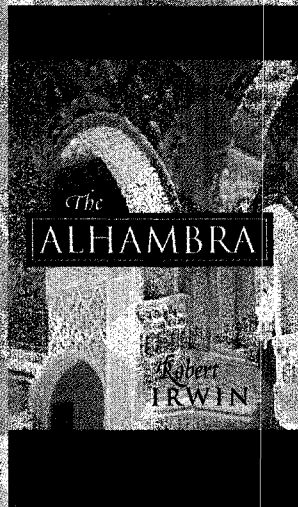
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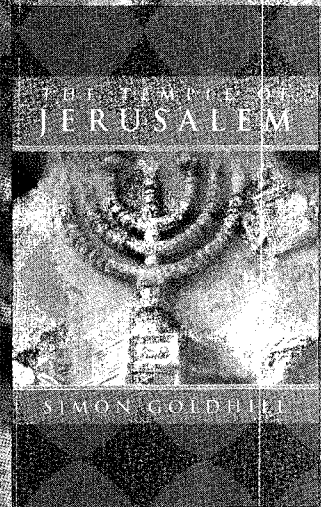
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BOOKS & CRITICS

JUNE 2005 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

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California Rising

by Ethan Rarick

The Singapore Grip

by J. G. Farrell

The Survivor

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Carry Me Back

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Golden State

What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

Daniel Fuchs, who died in 1993, at the age of eighty-four, won the accolade few authors wish for: “writer’s writer.” Although he was hailed by Sean O’Casey, Irving Howe, Mordecai Richler, William Maxwell (his editor at *The New Yorker*), and John Updike (who has written a considered and characteristically impish introduction to this book), the reading public neglected Fuchs until the reissue, decades after its 1930s publication, of his so-called Williamsburg Trilogy, a series of novels portraying immigrant Jewish life during the Depression, which anticipated the work of Malamud and Bellow. Those novels when first published didn’t come close to paying the bills (Fuchs made his living as a “permanent substitute teacher” in Brooklyn), so in 1937, like many other praised but impoverished East Coast writers, he went to Hollywood to write for the movies. Unlike most of his fellow New York literary types, he took to the work, becoming a successful though far from A-list screenwriter (he scripted the film-noir classics *Criss Cross* and *Panic in the Streets*, and won an Oscar in 1955 for *Love Me or Leave Me*). Also unlike his fellows, he understood and admired moviemaking, and he loved the landscape, climate, flora, and way of life in Los Angeles—and he never left. There, in “the immense, brilliantly clean sunshine that hovered over everything,” this son of the Williamsburg ghetto delighted in, to quote Updike, “the uncanny cleanliness and health of his growing, tanned children.” Fuchs’s fictional and nonfictional depictions of Los Angeles and the movie business (written from the 1930s through the late 1980s, mostly for *The New Yorker* and *Commentary*) have been assembled with great care and unusual intelligence in this collection. His appraisals are at once lyrical and hard: his ingenuous relish of the jasmine, orange blossoms, and honeysuckle in the soft air of a winter’s night in Beverly Hills never diminished, even as he dissected the narcissistic desperation at the heart of the Hollywood enterprise (see especially the title story and his far less successful novella portraying the crack-up of a screen goddess, *West of the Rockies*, also included here). His scrutiny of Hollywood is as acute as that of Fitzgerald, West, Odets, and Mailer,



THE GOLDEN WEST

by Daniel Fuchs
Black Sparrow

but unlike those embittered writers who merely sojourned on the coast, Fuchs matter-of-factly, almost ruminatively, took in the “shiny living” and the casual betrayals (“The things that went on, the thieving and conniving. You lived with it”). Budd Schulberg’s *What Makes Sammy Run?* remains the best fictional treatment of the movie business by an insider, but no writer has better conveyed the workaday life of the studios in their heyday, and most important, no writer has more fully revealed the craftsmanship and professionalism—along with the colossal complexity and the torment—of moviemaking. Fuchs grasped that the best creative work in America from the 1930s through the early 1950s was done for the movies. And those same producers he reveals to be thugs were, he also reveals, geniuses and committed artists. Creating works designed to engage and transport an audience “was a tantalizing, almost constantly frustrating pursuit, and the movie people gave themselves over to it with a tenacity that amounted to a kind of devotion.” That very pursuit, Fuchs suggests throughout these works, largely accounted for the frenzy and despair he coolly depicts.

California Rising: The Life and Times of Pat Brown, by *Ethan Rarick* (California). Governors Earl Warren and Pat Brown were the great political figures of California’s ebullient era—from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s—when the state consolidated its position as an economic colossus and emerged as the nation’s dominant social and cultural trendsetter. More than the soberly effective Warren, the expansive, glad-handing Brown, who held office from 1959 to 1967, personified the sense of limitless possibility that animated the California boom. Around the start of Brown’s second term California surpassed New York as the country’s most populous state. That event not only shifted the nation’s political balance; it also seemed to augur an ever-expanding tax base. Brown’s governorship would be defined by exhilarating if head-

long growth and free spending: during his tenure the state’s population increased by a third, and its budget tripled. He instituted or expanded a host of ambitious social programs. He presided over the burgeoning of the state’s higher-education system, already the envy of the world, adding four new colleges and three new universities. He built a thousand miles of freeways. He pushed through the largest state public-works project in American history: the 500-mile network of reservoirs, pumping stations, canals, pipes, and aqueducts that carry almost two billion gallons of water daily from northern California to the south. This sometimes excruciatingly detailed chronicle of Brown’s political history admirably



describes the infrastructure and programs, but omits analysis of their ultimate costs (of which Brown’s son, Jerry, California’s governor in a period of diminished expectations and heightened environmental awareness, would be acutely aware). But Rarick is strong on the intrigues and political battles that shaped Brown’s career. Brown ran against three of the most powerful politicians of his time: to become governor he trounced William F. Knowland, the leader of the Senate Republicans (and thereby quashed Knowland’s presidential ambitions); he defeated Richard Nixon in 1962 (a humiliation that prompted Nixon’s remark to reporters “You won’t have Nixon to kick around anymore”); and he was driven out by Ronald Reagan’s overwhelming victory in 1966 (which signaled the end of California’s era of opulent euphoria and launched the conservative counter-

revolution nationwide). Brown’s social and political formula—essentially, spend a lot and good things will happen—now seems somewhat crude and unimaginative. But it’s uplifting (if not exactly inspiring) in a state where slashed budgets and dysfunctional public institutions now characterize public life. What is inspiring, though, is the spirit of the time and place in which Brown humanely governed. California’s glorious run, the product of economic and social forces beyond Sacramento’s control, promised and delivered a better life for ordinary people than they could have enjoyed in any other place at any other time in history. Politically Brown embodied the vivacity and sweetness of that brief good life—“the swimming pools and backyard barbecues, the school yards teeming with healthy children, the suburban tracts and freeways, the whole Ozzie and Harriet splendor of it all” (to quote Kevin Starr’s evocation). For this reader, Rarick’s unintentionally nostalgic account confirms what longtime residents of this most forward-looking state in the Union know in their bones: the Golden State’s best days are behind it.

The Singapore Grip, by *J. G. Farrell* (NYRB Books). In 1979 a freak wave swept the Booker Prize-winning writer J. G. Farrell out to sea; his body was found a month later. In his brief life he’d written what would be, along with Paul Scott’s *The Raj Quartet*, the most complex and ambitious series of historical novels to emerge from Britain in the second half of the twentieth century. The novels of the Empire Trilogy were set during three different assaults on British rule: *Troubles* during the IRA’s brutal guerrilla war in 1919–1921; *The Siege of Krishnapur* during the Indian Mutiny of 1857; and this novel (long out of print and just reissued) in the years leading up to and during the Japanese invasion of Malaya and Singapore. In all three tales of violence and calamity Farrell juxtaposed an Austenian comedy of manners with slapstick and gallows humor, and punctuated the whole with absurdist scenes. The past is famously a foreign country, and in *Krishnapur*, for which he won the

Booker, and *The Singapore Grip*, Farrell's extraordinarily dense and fascinating detail couples with a subtle rendering of his characters' alien mentalities. Although *Krishnapur* is his most finely balanced book, *The Singapore Grip* (the term variously denotes a tropical disease, a rattan suitcase, a secret handshake, a special hairpin, the vaginal contractions that were a specialty of the city's prostitutes, and the British economic hold on Southeast Asia) is his broadest canvas and most elaborate work. Ramifying from an account of the relationship between the two British partners of a Singapore commercial firm, the 572-page novel takes readers on leisurely tours of, for instance, the nightlife of Singapore (then perhaps the world's most cosmopolitan city); the rubber plantations (with their exploited work force of Chinese, Indians, and Malays); and the Britons' intricate social world (characterized by the cloying ennui and bitter jealousies engendered by a willfully self-contained community). But all the while it tells a story of great narrative intensity: the shocking and relentless Japanese advance that sent British and Australian troops and their vacillating commanders scurrying down the Malay Peninsula, culminating in what Churchill called "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history." Singapore's fate was sealed almost at the start of the invasion, and Farrell matchlessly conveys the dull terror of incipient disaster that seized that rich, modern, but isolated and artificial metropolis. For decades its fall maintained a profound hold on the British imagination, resulting in scores of detailed and atmospheric memoirs and histories. None convey that event with the drama and complexity of this novel.

In the past decade or so academics have hailed the works of Farrell and Scott as forerunners of "post-colonialist" fiction. I'd therefore dreaded a loopy and pretentious preface. But readers would have been far better off with that than with the perfunctory and irrelevant introduction that the poet Derek Mahon, a friend of Farrell's, provides. Uneven introductions are all

one can really criticize in NYRB Books' otherwise superbly selected series of reissues.

The Survivor, by John F. Harris (Random House). Better accounts of the Clinton presidency will be written, but for now this is the best. Historical assessments of presidential administrations follow a drearily predictable pattern. First come the briefs for and against, then the partial, padded, and self-serving memoirs (those concerning Clinton's reign, including the ones written by the former president and First Lady, aren't better or worse than the usual lot, but they're especially cringe-inducing). The reading public, if it's particularly unlucky, will also be treated to a treacly quasi-official history of the Sorensenian or Schlesingerian variety. All these products are, of course, forms of special pleading, and all are therefore more or less dishonest. And journalists' instant histories, for their part, either reflect the agendas of their sources or read like an assemblage of old *Newsweek* stories. Harris, who covered the Clinton White House for *The Washington Post*, has larger ambitions. True, he obviously has nicely placed sources, and they've dished him some B-plus dirt (meaning gossip that's contrary to the official story and often embarrassing to the former president, although is now of merely historical interest). But he judiciously uses that gossip to elucidate significant policy or political decisions, or to show how that administration was hobbled by scandals of its own making (or by cover-ups, stonewalling, or prevarications concerning same). Harris, in short, has written a responsible, honest, tough, and—best of all—considered assessment of Clinton's presidency that will endear him to neither Clinton's enthusiastic supporters nor his vitriolic detractors. Undeniably, the administration lurched from indignity to indignity, which meant that it was usually operating defensively and that Clinton's governing was often marked by passivity and drift. But Harris convincingly limns a defining and enduring (and Wall Street-friendly) Clinton ideology: "a mild but innovative brand of liberalism that favored economic growth over

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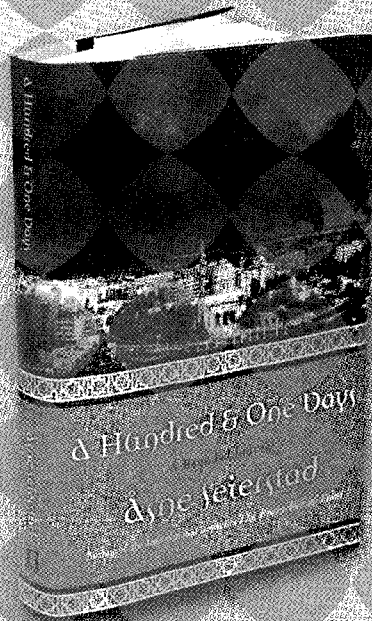
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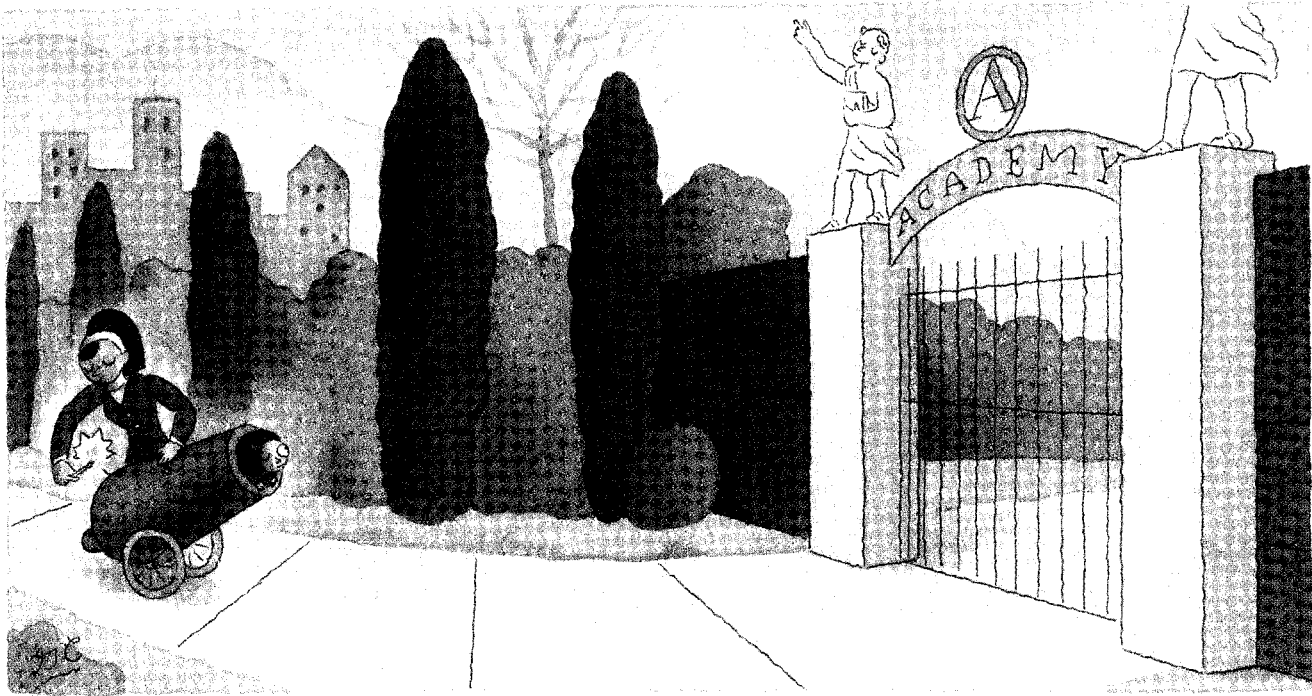
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redistribution, insisted that government pay its way rather than rely on budget deficits, and embraced free trade rather than taking refuge in protectionism." To be sure, Harris demonstrates that Clinton (almost certainly to a greater extent than his successor) appreciated the threat posed by Islamist terrorism, but he also demonstrates that Clinton's anxiety that his motives would be held suspect prevented him from adequately meeting that threat. And indeed, "he had followed a pattern of limited disclosure, evasive or false public explanations, and shabby personal conduct," so his "presumption of suspicion was far from unreasonable." In this crucial way, Harris concludes, Clinton failed to conduct a responsible presidency. And in this as in so many other ways, Clinton proved himself, to borrow from Fitzgerald, a man of vast carelessness, who ruinously made the personal political and left it to others to clean up the mess he made.

Carry Me Back, by Steven Deyle (Oxford). John Randolph of Roanoke, a slaveholder and a great orator, was once asked who he thought was the finest speaker of his day. "The greatest orator I ever heard," he replied, "was a woman. She was a slave and a mother and her rostrum was the auction block." The domestic slave trade was the worst feature of the greatest crime in American history. Confronted with its horrors (the forced separation of husbands from wives and of parents from children), even the loudest defenders of slavery grew silent, or squirmed, or deceived themselves and others—or pressed to reform it radically. The most perceptive historians insist, correctly, that slaveholders felt no guilt about the peculiar institution, save for this one aspect (Mary Boykin Chestnut told an English visitor as they passed a slave auction in Charleston, "If you can stand that, no other Southern thing need choke you"). The trade baldly contradicted the belief on which antebellum slavery rested: namely, that the master's relation to the slave was a paternalist one, based on reciprocal duties and obligations. Thus the trade imperiled slaveholders' image of

themselves, as well as the image they needed desperately to believe that their slaves had of them. (The intense day-to-day contact between slave and slaveholder—they often worked side by side, ate together, and worshipped in the same church—created particularly entangled relationships between them.) Surprisingly, for a long time scholars neglected this crucial facet of American slavery. In fact, the standard work on the subject, written in 1931, wasn't in essential ways superseded until the 1990s. The past fifteen years, though, has seen a flood of scholarship. Much of that work has been narrow (determining the number of local and interregional slave sales and the latter's role in the westward movement of slaves—among history's largest coerced migrations—has proved particularly thorny), but it's been necessary in order to reveal the trade's ubiquity and its centrality in ensuring the smooth functioning of the South's capital and labor markets. Deyle, on the other hand, takes a broad view. Even more important, he approaches the subject with nuance. He elucidates how a paternalist ethos mitigated and in other ways influenced the substance and style of the trade. (He assesses, for instance, the ample evidence of masters who, true to their paternalist principles, refused to separate families or reunited them, often at great financial loss. He fails, however, to analyze fully state lawmakers' attempts to regulate the trade, along with the practical consequences of such efforts.) But he also explicates how the trade exposed the contradiction at the heart of slavery: "the clash between the desire to achieve economic benefit at the expense of others and the paternalistic obligation to look after one's charges." And he reveals the ways in which desire routinely beat out a sense of duty. Indeed, what's most disturbing about this fine book—by far the best work to date on the subject—is its depiction of the weakness of men who thought themselves upright, and of how easily and casually equivocation and self-delusion permitted enormities. ▀

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and the national editor of The Atlantic.



BOOKS

Kiddie Class Struggle

One mom's breast-milk-curdling tour of lower education's higher end

BY SANDRA TSING LOH

Because, like many American mothers with children at home, I am a juggling, multi-tasking, somewhat less than full-time freelance employee, the hours I spent reading Camille Peri and Kate Moses's *Because I Said So*, Judith Warner's *Perfect Madness*, and Miriam Peskowitz's *The Truth Behind the Mommy Wars* also involved a lot of weeping in parking lots. In the spirit of motherly sharing, let me rush to explain why. It began with the—I thought simple—wish that our daughter attend kindergarten. In the strange voodoo that is California, although houses in our neighborhood have shot up to \$500,000, the corner school's demographics are 95 percent Hispanic; 76 percent of the students are learning English as a second language, and 92 percent qualify for a free lunch. Like most families just one year into the crowded magnet system, we've been waitlisted for schools with more English-speakers; any openings materializing locally will be assigned by lottery, the odds notoriously poor.

So, we figured, the simplest solution was to move. The shining beacons of L.A. public education are La Cañada and Calabasas, lovely bedroom neighborhoods where single-family homes run from \$850,000 to \$1.5 million (giving rise to my new favorite real-estate phrase: "\$1.1 million and it's on septic!"). One Sunday I saw a La Cañada listing at the Ikea-like Impossibly Low Price! of \$830,000. The house was small, but checking on the Internet revealed that it had a surprisingly big lot. Surely no one else had seen this, had done the research ... As we pulled up in our ever-so-slightly-pockmarked 1998 Toyota, my hopes crumbled upon seeing a mob of sleek-sunglassed parents, all business, plus their children, piling like vermin out of gleaming black Mercedes and Lexus SUV Horror-Mobiles, tossing ever-escalating sealed bids—like jaunty paper airplanes—over the squat house's peeling windowsills.

"If it weren't for all these Asians!" I hissed, crumpling the *Los Angeles Times* real-estate section in my fist. I confess

that even more flew out, to the tune of "Asians—they overfetishize education, drive up the real-estate market, and P.S., I hate their tile!" It concerned my husband that in our quest to secure our daughter a quality education, to forge her into a forward-looking citizen of the world, I—myself of Asian descent—was becoming a frothing, snarling racist. Wasn't there another way?

Fortunately, yes. In our darkest hour we turned to religion. Upon learning that tuition at parochial schools is half that at name L.A. private schools (where it runs from \$14,000 to \$26,000 a year), my husband and I—recalling that we have two kids to spring for—dropped our Left Coast Democratic leanings and immediately found God. Any God would do. We weren't picky. Here was a glossy Baptist flyer showing happy children: "Picture your child attending a school where every subject is taught from a Biblical perspective!" Here was a Catholic one, with a photo of the pope—for whom I experienced a stab of affection, thinking, "People put down the pope, but he has actually made some pretty good points. Can't remember what they are, but look at the tuition—\$4,500!"

We eventually settled on the middlebrow Lutherans and their middlebrow Luther Hall, considered not top-tier but certainly decent, with no recent shootings. Which I like to think

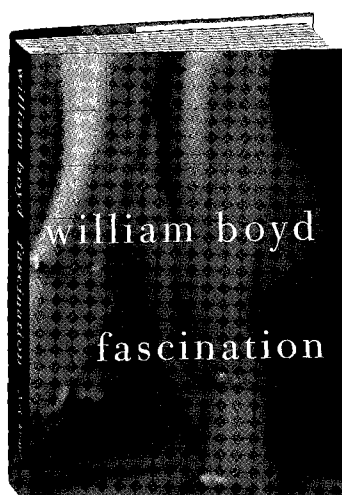
GREG CLARKE

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William Boyd FASCINATION

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—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"His prose style has the economy and power of a line drawing by Matisse."

—*Boston Globe*

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describes our middlebrow 1998 minivan family as well—"Not top-tier but certainly decent, with no recent shootings." Comparing Luther Hall's \$6,500 a year with the \$10,000 property tax on the La Cañada tear-down, I felt the pressure releasing. The kindergarten had openings; we were applying in time; and the only thing standing between us and an acceptance letter was a twenty-minute evaluation. Said evaluation was a sleepy one-on-one with a teacher, involving simple questions ("What's your favorite ice cream?"), the replicating of some block arrangements, pencil work ("Can you write your name?" Yes), and the copying of shapes of increasing difficulty, culminating in a grid I can only describe as "the British flag"—which, with almost pencil-breaking effort, my daughter actually did. When asked to name some animals, she opened with "Lion, tiger, hippopotamus ..." I thought this showed style.

Indeed, I was just going through my address book, phoning everyone with news of my daughter's genius ("She said her favorite ice cream was mango!"), when word came that Luther Hall felt my daughter had failed the test, that she was not developmentally ready for kindergarten and would actually have to be held back a year. This is the *2001: A Space Odyssey* moment when lights and colors around you smear into tunnels. My gut turned to ice, and I vaulted into the minivan, bouncing crazily down the rainy boulevard like a wild-eyed mother tiger, through stoplights flaring orange, my knuckles turning white, to Luther Hall, to ... well, apparently to go question by question through my daughter's awful pink Gesell readiness assessment. At the top was her age, 4.4; below was a sea of ADD-type phrases: "intermittent eye contact," "not focused," "attention seemed to wander." Next to "Conversation," "Blocks," and "Pencil-work" was an age-appropriate spray of 4.0s and 4.5s, "but by February," the administrator said, "we want to see more 4.5s moving into 5.0s." The British flag

was a 6.0. But because she did not then want to try the much simpler diamond: a 4.0. The animal naming was timed—twenty seconds, forty, sixty. You're not supposed to peak at hippopotamus, or wait for praise. You're supposed to press on and on and on ...

In the parking lot, in the rain, in my white Toyota minibarge of failure, I cried, because I now saw the error of my relaxed, irreverent ways. All those hysterical Los Angeles über-moms I used to mock (call them the Suzanne Vandenburg-Kiplings), with their shining yoga faces, Mozart in the womb, natural birth, Baby Einstein, scary brain-stimulating black-and-white baby

mobiles, getting on extended waiting lists for super preschools, piano lessons at two ... They were actually right! Any one of these tricks would have gotten us over the hump of 4.3s to probably more like 4.7s and 4.8s at age 4.4. If her mother had been paying any attention, I thought, my daughter would not be sitting alone come September with no kindergarten to go to, One Child Left Behind.

Which is a long way of saying that I begin Peri and Moses's essay anthology *Because I Said So* in a foul mood. I actually crack its

spine while at Under the Sea, the hideous neon Chuck E. Cheese-like indoor playground my daughters and I prefer to the vastly more educational Kid-space Children's Museum across town, whose tasteful décor is nicer than that of my house. Because, unlike at an open-air playground, the children can't actually escape, Under the Sea is my office away from home. (And you've seen the results.)

Co-founders of the popular *Salon* feature "Mothers Who Think," which itself grew into an eponymous best-selling anthology, Peri and Moses, in their chatty introduction, describe formulating early ideas while very much caught up in motherhood's jumble—on outings at the zoo, in the bleachers at soccer practice, and, yes, "while waiting

BECAUSE I SAID SO:
33 Mothers Write
About Children, Sex,
Men, Aging, Faith,
Race & Themselves

by Camille Peri
and Kate Moses
HarperCollins

PERFECT MADNESS:
Motherhood in
the Age of Anxiety

by Judith Warner
Riverhead

**THE TRUTH
BEHIND THE
MOMMY WARS:**
Who Decides
What Makes a
Good Mother?

by Miriam Peskowitz
Seal Press

at the pharmacy for amoxicillin prescriptions." But just as I'm settling in to my own jumble, hunching over the pizza counter, spine relaxing, the Mothers start Thinking—unfortunately, much too hard for me.

In the United States as we know it now, the one-size-fits-all how-tos still being recycled in the parenting literature are not only useless, they are laughable, even irresponsible, as the subjects of some of the stories in this book make clear. What's a black mother to do when people assume she's the hired nanny of her biracial child? What's a modern Muslim mother to do when her American mosque tries to banish her for having a child but no husband? What's a widow to do when her son asks why his father was killed by terrorists? What's a husband to do in the waiting room while his wife's eggs are being transferred to the uterus of the woman who may carry their child to term?

Mothers Who Think celebrated "the emphatic telling of mothers' truths," and in that spirit I declare my truth in 2005 to be that I am suffering from Women's Anthology Fatigue. The subtitle of *Because I Said So* is "33 Mothers Write About Children, Sex, Men, Aging, Faith, Race & Themselves," which alone exhausted me. I recalled reading Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild's anthology *Global Woman*, a sociologically important book, and thinking helplessly at one point, "But what can I do if a young Filipina fell in love and moved in with an abusive unemployed alcoholic—and yet somehow managed, between the weepings and beatings, to create four children? Yes, it's horrible that the only way to support her kids is to nanny for a hideous Manhattan socialite in a disturbing pattern of global Third World female exploitation, but ..." All I can do, really, is to send up a spiritual thought balloon of my sincerest condolences. I would march on Washington, but hey, I can't even get my kid into kindergarten! Because the scope of my motherhood has shrunk to the size of a panic room, I've got nothing left for news outside it. (Which also explains why I go blank any time I hear a sentence that begins with that passionate feminist catchphrase "But in Denmark ... !")

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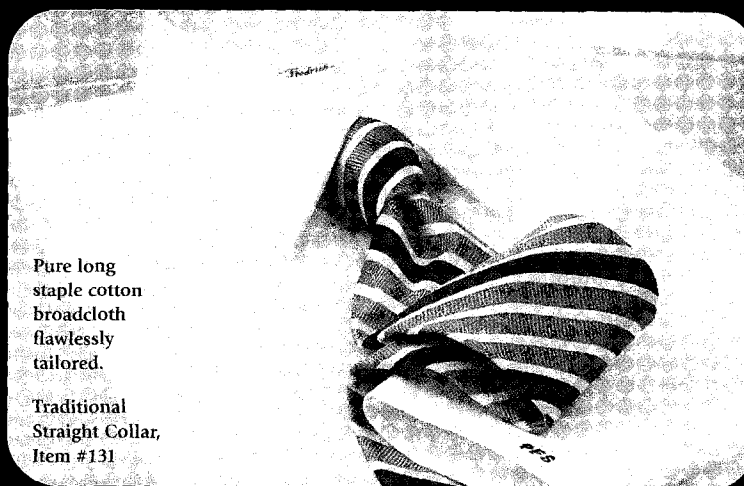
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It's gloomy to feel so negative about global sisterhood, because there are individual essays in *Because I Said So* that I really enjoy. Margaret Talbot's "Material Girls"—relating her guilty pleasure in, and her apt deconstruction of, American Girl dolls—is hilarious. In "On Giving Hope," Daniel Pearl's widow, Mariane, writes with fierce optimism of her dreams for their son, born after Pearl's murder. Jean Hanff Korelitz's "Why I Can Never Go Back to the French Laundry" terrifically captures the sensation of maternal guilt: as Korelitz settles down to an exquisite dinner and then realizes that she has not in fact actually met the children's babysitter, "I had the strangest sensation of an egg breaking over my head, but the egg was full of acid, and the acid swept instantly through my skin and rampaged through my bloodstream." Mary Morris's "Chaos Theory" describes a neatnik

her home, and her husband, and living on food stamps. Her one source of pride is that by cutting corners and making deals, she was able to keep her kids in their exclusive Marin school.

And all I can think is "What is she complaining about? She got them in!"

Good news on the kindergarten front! The cavalry's here. My friend Leah is outraged at our rejection—and by a school she has never even heard of! "Lutherans?" she rails. "Since when are they exclusive? How dare they? Don't they know who you are? You're a celebrity mom!"

"I'm a public-radio celebrity," I remind her, "which in L.A. is like being the genteel poor." I'm ashamed to admit that while tearfully arguing my daughter's case—"But look at this British-flag thing; it's a 6.0!"—I indeed tried, between sobs, to utter a few sentences in "public-radio

The whole wobbly enterprise is making me feel a little like Sean Young in a Catwoman suit, rattling the gates of Warner Bros. But there's nothing you mustn't stoop to for your children.

mother's gradual acceptance of a messy house. I particularly love this humanizing detail: Morris's teenage daughter, while showering, pulls out strands of her unruly mane and sticks them to the wall so they won't clog the drain.

Kate Moses's "Mother of the World" weaves together losing a baby to miscarriage, losing friends to cancer, and traveling to Egypt to find Fayum portraits of a centuries-dead young mother and child. It's quite moving to read at forty-three, while at the same delicate balancing point between fertility and cronedom that Moses describes. I also experience catharsis—healing, even—upon seeing fine prose used in a maternal tale of real poignance. (While reading Naomi Wolf's *Misconceptions*, on the other hand, I had only sour thoughts: "Never mind the cesareans—you had two healthy babies!" I imagine her response: "But in Africa ...!")

Because I am in a crabbed state of mind, however, the essay that sticks with me is Andrea Gray's "Survivor." Gray writes about losing her business,

voice" to gain a little stature; but the dour administrator just looked at me blankly.

"Nonsense—everyone knows you!" Leah sings out. "And believe me, private-school admission is not about the kids but the parents." She places a call to her friend Jacqueline—a "huge fan" who teaches French at The Learning Project, a very first-rate, very educationally progressive L.A. private school. "*Mais non!*" Jacqueline cries, upon hearing of our *tragedie*—we must send our kids to TLP. (Editorial note: The identities of all schools and administrators mentioned in this article have been disguised, if poorly.)

By day's end Jacqueline has called back with news of a somewhat mixed nature that yet offers some hope if approached opportunistically. The admissions coordinator, Dee, is a "huge fan," but the all-powerful headmistress, a lady named Mrs. Feninger, while not exactly a non-fan, has never heard of me. The good news is that Mrs. Feninger has recently developed a mania for fundraising, because of

READING LIST

STRANGE BUTTERFLIES

Recent collections from the photographic fringe

BY TERRY CASTLE

Create and Be Recognized: Photography on the Edge, by John Turner and Deborah Klochko (2004). The title scrawled by the outsider artist Howard Finster (1916–2001) on one of his loopy, out-of-focus Polaroids—"Strange Butterfly (Black Cross)"—suggests the hallucinatory beauty displayed here. (Finster's surreal snap is of a moth, almost camouflaged on a tree trunk, its wings marked with a tiny, scary, upside-down crucifix.) The editors have assembled the work of seventeen "largely self-taught" photographers, from the schizophrenic Adolf Wölfl (1864–1930) to the Humbert Humbert–like Morton Bartlett (1909–1992), who obsessively photographed little plaster girl figurines, all homemade, in glamorous nymphet poses. Most disturbing, though, is a set of demented self-portraits, taken in a Greyhound-station photo booth, by Lee Godie (1908–1994), homeless Chicago madwoman, self-proclaimed "French Impressionist," and—alone in her curtained cubicle—hilarious, vamping imitator of spoiled society matrons.

Portraits, by Hellen van Meene (2004). How Vermeer might have photographed—after a tab of LSD. Van Meene takes delicate, sumptuously colored, mysteriously "posed" photos of Dutch, German, and Japanese girls on the cusp of puberty, some of whom are seen indoors (often with wet hair), while others stand outside, awkwardly, next to flat, unremarkable fields. Several wear camisoles or little undershirts and have the plump, babyish bodies of girls who will never quite fit in. All seem lost in thought. For the female viewer, a great wash of sadness.

The Devil's Playground, by Nan Goldin (2003). Go on, admit it: she's now the greatest living American photographer. No one else these days captures such intimacy, human warmth, and sheer Cibachrome loveliness in her pictures. The autobiographical photographs making up this enormous volume—from the 1980s and 1990s, showing Nan and friends kissing, smoking, dreaming, eating, having sex, lying on their beds—are impossible to stop looking at.



Top: *Untitled*, from *Portraits*, by Hellen van Meene. Above: Simon and Jessica Looking at Each Other Through Light, Paris, 2001, from *The Devil's Playground*, by Nan Goldin.

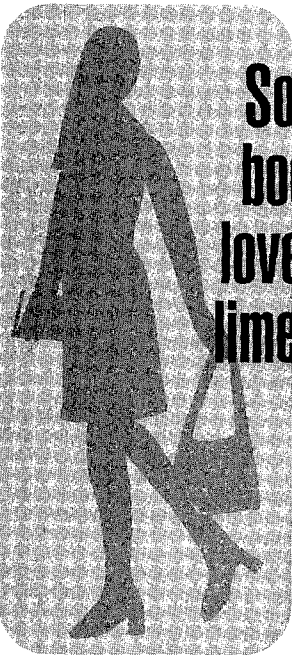
Forget the "self-indulgent" tag: among contemporary light-box artists she is our supreme humanist, perhaps because she realizes—after all the partying and overdosing—that she's lucky to be alive.

At Ease: Navy Men of World War II, edited by Evan Bachner (2004). Turk, my late stepfather, a World War II veteran, thirty-year submariner, and raving closet case, would have reviled (yet secretly adored) this book. It's a gay dream come true: skivvy-clad young swabbies of impossible pulchritude draped on aircraft-carrier flight decks

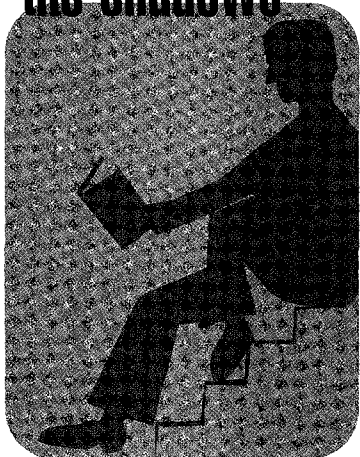
and gun turrets in every sunbathing posture known to man. These images of "ordinary" shipboard life were taken by Edward Steichen, Horace Bristol, Charles Fenno Jacobs, and other members of the wartime Naval Aviation Photographic Unit. As Bachner suggests in a knowing yet respectful introduction, the unguarded homoeroticism of the men in the photos is at once astonishing and oddly moving.

Terry Castle is a professor of English at Stanford University. Her books include *The Apparitional Lesbian* and *Boss Ladies, Watch Out!: Essays on Women, Sex, and Writing*.

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a new computer center. An excitable description ensues (“*Très Pixar!* ...”), the Franco-technological import of which is hard to follow—all I can tell you is that I have a vague, slightly vibrating feeling about the new computer center. Dee has convinced Mrs. Feninger that a public-radio celeb—albeit one she has never heard of—will be a crack fundraiser. *Formidable*, Jacqueline suggests to me, would be if I put together a gift basket of signed books with a letter introducing myself and my husband and our own mania for fundraising, which we are burning to share.

While there are roadblocks yet to cross—not the least being that The Learning Project is \$14,000 a year (Leah waves her hands dismissively: “Financial aid! Repeat after me: ‘*I am a celebrity mom!*’”)—we have won a slot in the last Learning Project “play encounter.” Yes, the whole wobbly enterprise is making me feel a little like Sean Young in a Catwoman suit, rattling the gates of Warner Bros. (“Here’s a video we shot of me in Donna Karan and an Easter bonnet, pretending to emcee your annual Spring Fling auction!”) But, we all agree, there’s nothing you mustn’t stoop to for your children.

Upon moving from France to America, Judith Warner writes in *Perfect Madness*, she experienced culture shock. France was a parent’s “paradise,” rich with mother/family benefits, while America ... (Cue Axl Rose screaming, “Welcome to the Jungle!”) America was full of relatively privileged mothers suffering a “choking cocktail of guilt and anxiety and resentment and regret.”

So what has brought us to what one mom calls “this, this, this ... *this mess*”? “It’s not the ‘fault’ of the media,” Warner says (quelling any doubts that her real subtitle should be “But in France ... !”).

Or the Christian Right. Or George W. Bush. Or Phyllis Schlafly. Or Dr. Laura Schlessinger. Or Mrs. Doubtfire. It’s *us*—this generation of mothers. And it’s the way our culture has groomed and greeted us. Mixing promise with politics, feminism with “family values,” science and sound bites and religion and, above all, *fear* into a combustible combination that is nothing less than perfect madness.

Warner dubs today’s Problem That Has No Name “The Mommy Mystique,” a gauzy tissue of beliefs that tell us “we are the luckiest women in the world—the freest, with the most choices, the broadest horizons, the best luck, and the most wealth.” Further,

It says we have the knowledge and know-how to make “informed decisions” that will guarantee the successful course of our children’s lives. It tells us that if we choose badly our children will fall prey to countless dangers—from insecure attachment to drugs to kidnapping to a third-rate college. And if this happens, if our children stray from the path toward happiness and success, we will have no one but ourselves to blame. Because to point fingers out at society, to look beyond ourselves, is to shirk “personal responsibility.” To admit that we cannot do everything ourselves, that indeed we need help—and help on a large, systematic scale—is tantamount to admitting personal failure.

Comforted by the Mommy Mystique, we are convinced that every decision we make, every detail we control, is *incredibly important*.

Just as I’m giddily trimming celadon-colored Japanese ribbon for my Mrs. Feninger gift basket, this sentence gives me pause.

Warner says that our generation of post-Baby Boomers, born from 1958 to the early 1970s, is ripe for Mommy Mystique-dom. Our evolution, in an eerily accurate nutshell?

In the 1980s, you couldn’t invite a friend over for dinner without her opening the oven door and doing a quick calorie count before she mentally committed herself to eating.

In the 1990s, she brought her *own* dinner—because she was, inevitably, allergic to whatever you served.

We have long been a generation of control freaks.

For decades now, we have had a tendency to act as though contagion—the contagion of out-of-controlness—lay behind every corner. Behind every pot lid, every menu, every play date.

Warner is not the first to note that feminism’s ascension on college campuses paralleled the rise of anorexia nervosa. But her connection between hyper food freaks and hyper mom freaks fascinates me. As weight-consciousness

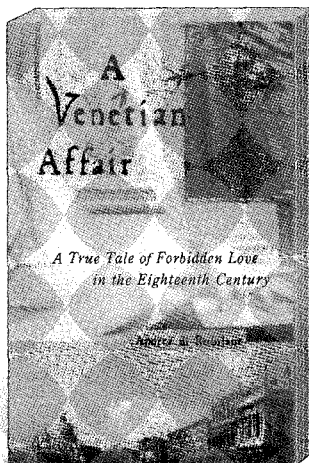
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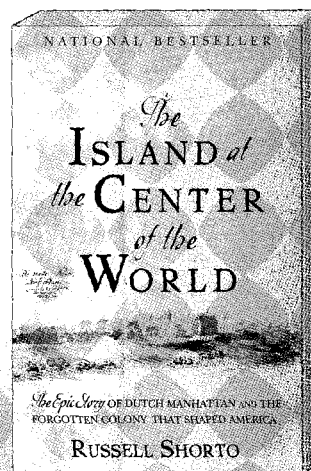


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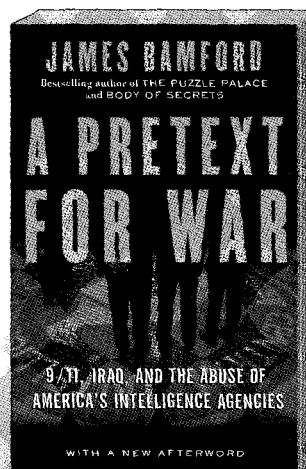
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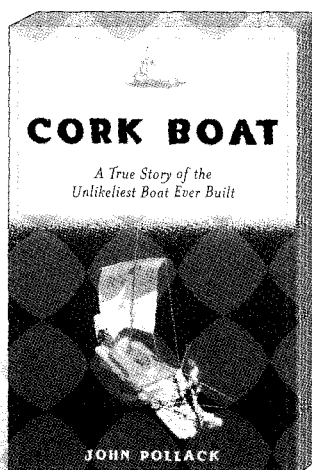
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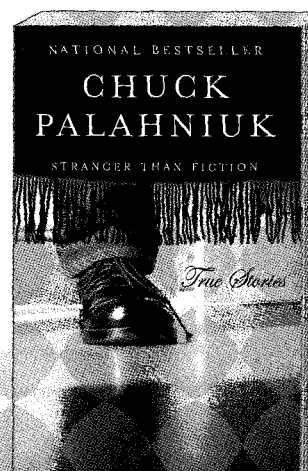


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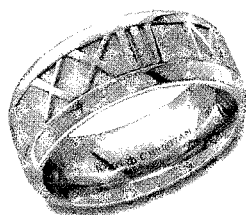
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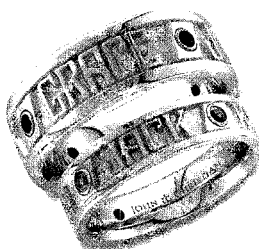
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is an obsession with numbers, I think of the school APIs (Academic Performance Indexes) I'm always punching up on the Internet and comparing. There are other means by which to measure academic performance, and other descriptors for the likely educational experience, and if all else fails and you have the time (yeah, right), you can break down and actually go visit a school under consideration. But for the record, the La Cañada school has a Harvard-class-of-2021 API: 953 out of a possible 1,000. Our local Van Nuys school scores a McDonald's-fryer-bound 673. When a Berkeley friend called and complained about her daughter's third-grade teacher, I logged on, called back angrily, and exclaimed, "Count your blessings, baby! Your school's API is a UCLA-on-scholarship-ready 810!"

Just driving over to The Learning Project for our "play encounter," I'm already feeling queasy. Gnawing at me is Judith Warner's assertion that I am probably crazy. Have I indeed been traveling through this entire kindergarten journey/"mess" in a state of perfect madness? That would make me vastly less confident about the "choices" I've made to get us here. In the past week my Grrrr! Power-like battle cry of "I am a celebrity mom!" has devolved to the far less glamorous "I am a celebrity mom who needs financial aid." Leah has pointed out that since at one elite L.A. middle school they actually—ironically enough—teach my essay-writing style, I may eventually be able to barter the teaching of writing for a break in my kids' private-school tuition.

I always planned to teach again, but I never thought I'd be instructing only eighth-graders of the greatest wealth, attending schools I could never afford. The vision of endlessly spiraling privilege is positively Escher-like.

Another problem is TLP's location. If such a metaphor had been tried in *Global Woman*, I would have dinged the writer for lachrymosity—but yes, to get to yon Isle of White, we pass taquerias, a check-cashing joint, a group of weary-looking Hispanic women standing at the bus stop. Then we come upon the TLP security gate, which swings

open onto a painted castle compound in the middle of which is a leafy glade abuzz with English, math, Mozart, and, weirdly enough, Spanish! "And global citizenship," our guide enthuses. "The kids voted and decided they wanted to send money to Asia this year for the tsunami!" (I lean over to my husband and murmur, "Throw a stone over the wall and you've got a tsunami! A tsunami of Latinos! Forty to a class!")

The tour goes on, describing TLP's psychologist-developed kindergarten math games, linguistic puzzles, off-the-chart test scores, almost-guaranteed admission into top secondary schools. And then, of course, there it is: the new computer center. A hive of white children pecking, learning faster faster. And I find myself hysterically thinking, "This is where the hatchlings live, the hatchlings who will become the corporate lawyers of tomorrow!"

The school's new computer center is a hive of white children pecking, learning faster faster faster. And I think, "These are the hatchlings who will become the corporate lawyers of tomorrow!"

And then I think, "Who are these \$14,000-a-year-for-kindergarten parents? Why do their kids need to be Baby Einsteins in an era when our president is a guy who says 'nu-cu-lar'?"

She's a tempting image, that über-mom, my very own dreamscape Suzanne Vandenburg-Kipling. Blonde ponytail, dark sunglasses, yoga pants, roaring by in her black SUV, hurtling toward junior's violin lesson, Whole Foods chai in her cupholder, chairwoman of her school's celebrity tsunami-relief auction—partly to build her kids' self-esteem, partly so they can accrue Yale-friendly extracurricular credit. Compare her with the older, squarer, fatter lady at our neighborhood church, who said recently, "We teach the children we're part of the global community ... sometimes against our will." That morning she'd led a group to the boulevard in front of the church to pick up trash.

Miriam Peskowitz describes the demographic categorization of American mothers in her book *The Truth Behind*

the Mommy Wars. She notes that Euro RSCG, the world's fifth largest advertising agency and popularizer of the term "metrosexual," has broken down American mothers into the following "hot" advertising categories: Domestic Divas (employ nannies to raise flawless kids and housekeepers to keep the home gorgeous), Boomerang Moms (worked when kids were small, left work when kids were teens, à la Karen Hughes and Maria Shriver), Yummy Mummies (staying fabulous at the gym—Catherine Zeta-Jones), Mini-Me Moms (kids are fashion accessories—Madonna, Anna Wintour, Kathie Lee Gifford). The final category, the Rage Brigade, is the least interesting marketing niche, because "rage women don't have expendable income or lots of time and desire to shop."

The Mommy Wars of which Peskowitz writes break things down much more simply, pitting working moms

against stay-at-homes. But Peskowitz argues that this is a false division. According to data she cites, only 37 percent of working mothers actually work full time; most of us are on a "carousel" of full-time to part-time to no work that we're continually stepping on and off. We have more in common than not, but—bombed by Mommy Wars media stories—we don't see it that way. Peskowitz describes a mom she met on a Manhattan playground. Depressed about the transition from seventy-hour weeks to full-time momhood, the mother was complaining—vaguely—about the Mommy Wars, even while staunchly defending the brokerage firm that had just let her go. She argued like a good dead soldier that there couldn't be part-time jobs on Wall Street.

Here is the problem, Peskowitz contends, with the now infamous Lisa Belkin *New York Times Magazine* article "The Opt-Out Revolution" (which one letter writer described as "a feel-good piece for the Muffy set"). High-achieving women always describe opting out as

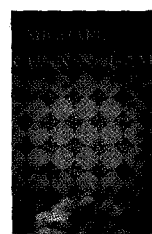
NEW FICTION

Finds and flops

BY JOSEPH O'NEILL

Like its predecessor, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Hours*, Michael Cunningham's fifth novel consists of three stories set in three different epochs. Also like *The Hours*, which reworked Virginia Woolf, this narrative triplex is built on a bookish foundation: the poetry and ontology of Walt Whitman. The poet appears in person in the first story, a supernatural tale about a malformed, Whitman-reciting thirteen-year-old and his family, whose members are all horribly transmogrified, physically

and spiritually, by the grotesque nature of factory work. The second is a detective story of post-9/11 New York, in which a woman police officer hunts down children who have smoked too much *Leaves of Grass*, as it were, and turned into suicide bombers. The third, set in a "post-meltdown" America of



SPECIMEN DAYS

by Michael
Cunningham

Farrar Straus
& Giroux

the future, tells of a humanoid's escape, in the company of an extraterrestrial, from sinister "Old New York"—a humanoid who, for thematic reasons, is given to involuntary fits of quoting Whitman.

This clanking trope points up a problem with the book. However vertiginous Cunningham's preoccupations may be—they include the essential oneness of astral and animal and man-made beings (Whitman: "Every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you"); the mysteries of reincarnation or re-embodiment (characters, names, and identities drift loosely from one tale to another); the frightening automation of humanity—they are grounded in a book that is marred by the mechanization it decries. The plots often seem made, not begotten; each, finally, is reduced to melodrama.

Michael Cunningham is one of the most humane and moving writers we have; but the toiling quality of *Specimen Days* suggests that (unlike, say, David Mitchell) he may lack the naturally impassioned formalism required to make a multi-genre novel come truly to life.

Joseph O'Neill is working on his third novel, *The Brooklyn Dream Game*.

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a “choice,” whereas their high-intensity workplaces are typically the ones that give little choice—it’s seventy hours a week or nothing.

But what about the daddies? Where are they in all this putative warring, all this worrying? Is insane parental fretting just a chick thing? Hardly. At one point during the tour at TLP the administrators—partly as an ice-breaker, partly to demonstrate a favorite learning exercise at TLP—actually broke us parents out into pairs to discuss our aspirations for our children’s kindergarten. My husband’s partner was the wife of a famous movie actor (a well-known starship captain), whereas I paired off with a surgeon in scrubs. As we babbled on, and our responses were logged onto a whiteboard, making us the ultimate focus group, it became clear that in order to calm the parental beast that lives within, a school has to look friendly and its classes have to be small, its toys new, its art pretty, its children happy, and, above all, its lawns green.

A lawyer, in a suit, said he wanted his son “never to be bored” at school. “He’s a bright kid who needs constant stimulation in order to remain engaged—I want him to be excited to go to school!” And at \$14,000 a year for kindergarten, I know he will be. In order to provide that kind of value, the friendly staff will literally have to scrape our children’s bows across their violin strings. In a soothing, self-esteem-enhancing motion. While the children are being visually stimulated. And their pelts brushed like ponies’. Before all star in a play. About global citizenship. In exotic faraway places. Well beyond the castle gates and all those global citizens in the surrounding neighborhood.

In capturing the hopes and fears of this privileged, self-obsessed generation of parents, Judith Warner tellingly writes,

Our baby boomer elders often call us selfish, but in doing so they miss a larger point: that what our obsessive looking-inward hides is at base a kind of despair. A lack of faith that change can come to the outside world ... The desperate, grasping, and controlling way so many women go about the job of motherhood, turning energy that used to demand social change

inward into control-freakishness, is our hallmark as a generation. We have taken it upon ourselves as super mothers to be everything to our children that society refuses to be: not just loving nurturers but educators, entertainers, guardians of environmental purity, protectors of a stable and prosperous future.

Thus does *weltschmerz* improbably drive a generation of overweening parents.

When I was young, my family traveled a lot and lacked money, so my education was dotted with many crappy schools. And looking back, I realize that bad schools were where I had some of the peak educational experiences of my life. The boredom of a bad teacher can be character-building: while your attention is wandering, you may discover who you truly are. These days, for such extraordinary prices and clearly extraordinary value (a guarantee that privileged children will never become bored), we may be breeding a generation of trembling terriers, totally unprepared to fail a test, to move to a new city, to get their own apartments.

Reassured by past crappiness, I decide to unbolt the door to my panic room. I give up on guaranteeing my children admission to Harvard by the age of five. It’s a relief, actually. I just couldn’t have lived under the zodiac sign Mother Tiger any longer. My breast milk was curdling; my fangs were losing their edge. Here, then, are my cheerful new mantras: “We’re saving \$14,000 a year!” “It’s just kindergarten!” “What with the 95 percent Latino population, it’s like my daughter’s having her year abroad right here in town!” If I can’t be a Global Woman, I can at least, for one year, be Local, if not actually Loca. Maybe my scraggly 673 API corner elementary school needs someone to teach essay writing, or just to pick up *basura*.

I drive up for a look. There’s a little bungalow, with a green awning that says COLLEGE BEGINS IN KINDERGARTEN. There’s a hopeful cartoon wolf with a mortarboard. Who won’t ... stop ... thinking about tomorrow. Really? Okay, off we go. ▀

Sandra Tsing Loh is a contributing editor of The Atlantic. Her commentaries appear regularly on American Public Media’s Marketplace.



BOOKS

A Doomed Young Man

No, he was not Byron. But he certainly tried

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

“The point to be marked in a study of *A Hero of Our Time*,” observed Vladimir Nabokov, “is that, though of tremendous and at times somewhat morbid interest to the sociologist, the ‘time’ is of less interest to the student of literature than the ‘hero.’” With this characteristically lofty ruling—which helped introduce his own co-translation of the novel in 1958—Nabokov proposed a false antithesis, or a distinction without a difference. The “student of literature” must needs be to some extent a student of history, if not exactly of “sociology.” Much of the fascination that the book continues to exert is owing to its context, and none of the editions I possess, including Paul Foote’s 1966 translation and now this very deft version by Hugh Aplin, has failed to include quite a deal of background material without which Mikhail Lermontov’s brief, intricate masterpiece is difficult to appreciate. These five nicely chiseled stories, giving *Rashomon*-like perspectives on the short life of a doomed young man, are in a most intriguing way “of their time.”



The equally pleasurable elements of time and heroism are in fact united in the most common description of the novel and its author: both are referred to as “Byronic.” And the similitude is fair in either case. Early Russian literature was intimately connected to the Europeanizing and liberal tendency of the “Decembrist” revolution of 1825, which was enthusiastically supported by Pushkin and his inheritor Lermontov. And the debt of those rebels to Byron’s inspiration was almost cultish in its depth and degree. Lermontov even published a short poem in 1832 titled “No, I’m Not Byron.” In it he wrote,

No, I’m not Byron: set apart
Like him, by Fate (though I’m
unknown yet) ...

I started sooner, I’ll end sooner:
But little work will I complete ...

Those last two lines surely betray a foreknowledge of—almost an ambition for—an early and Romantic death. A few months before his actual death, in 1841, Lermontov set down this even more premonitory verse:

In noon’s heat, in a dale of Dagestan,
With lead inside my breast, stirless
I lay;
The deep wound still smoked on;
my blood
Kept trickling drop by drop away.

Dagestan, like Chechnya and Ossetia, is part of the southern Caucasus, which czarism was at that time engaged in conquering and disciplining. (This was the Russian end of the “Great Game” that Kipling later described as extending all the way to the North-West Frontier Province of India and Afghanistan.) Lermontov served twice in the Caucasus as a cavalryman, both times as punishment. On the first occasion he had offended the authorities by writing a poem implying that Pushkin’s death, in a duel in 1837, had been orchestrated by the czar’s regime. On the second occasion he was in trouble for fighting a duel himself, with the son of the French ambassador to St. Petersburg. In 1841 he fought another duel, with a brother officer in the Caucasus, not far from the spot where Pechorin fights his duel in *A Hero of Our Time*, and was killed instantly. This obsession with single combat and possible self-immolation is admitted by Nabokov to be poignant because, as he bluntly put it, “the poet’s dream came true.” Well, then: we should by all means be as much aware of the surrounding conditions as he was.

Lermontov, like Byron, was of partly Scottish origin, being descended from a seventeenth-century mercenary named George Learmont. (Pushkin himself was of part-Ethiopian descent, so multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity had their role to play in the evolution of Russian letters; but Sir Walter Scott was also a kind of gold standard in those days, and his *Old Mortality*, of all novels, is respectfully mentioned as the book that Pechorin reads on the night before the duel.) Lermontov recurs to Byron with attention throughout *A Hero of Our Time*. Pechorin’s close friend, Werner the physician, is described as having “one leg shorter than the other, like Byron.” His chief female target, Princess Mary, is described admiringly as one “who’s read Byron in English and knows algebra.” (Most Russians of the period would have read Byron in French.) In a moody moment Pechorin

To some, sunglasses are a fashion accessory...

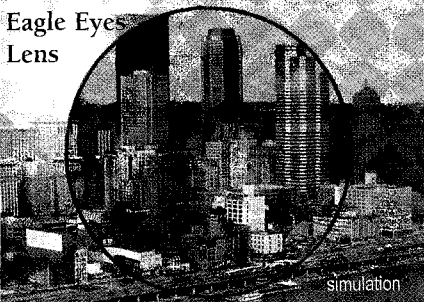
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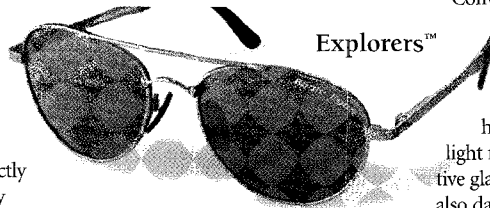
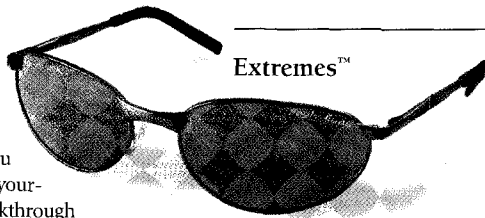
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reflects, "How many people, beginning their lives, think they'll end them like Alexander the Great or Lord Byron, but then remain titular councillors an entire lifetime?" He speaks appreciatively of a poem titled "The Vampyre," which was then believed to be Byron's work.

It is when we move from the Byronic to the ironic that difficulties arise. The publication of the novel, in 1840, aroused a pitch of criticism that was based on the very title itself. How could such a louche, amoral young man as Pechorin be presented as a hero? In a languid preface to the second edition Lermontov commented, "Our public is still so young and ingenuous that it does not understand a fable if it does not find a moral at the end of it. It does not get a joke, does not sense an irony; it is simply badly brought up." But where is the irony of the title to be discovered? Once again it is necessary to be daring enough to disagree with Nabokov. Quite plainly, Pechorin is not presented as a "hero" of any kind. Even when described by others who admire him, such as the staunch old soldier Maxim Maximych (one of a series of diminishingly reliable narrators), he appears affectless and irresponsible even if charismatic. To himself, he is bored and detached on the outside and moved by nameless discontents within. To the objective reader, if such there be, he seems callous and occasionally sadistic. At the very end of the last story he demonstrates a bit of initiative and élan in subduing a homicidal Cossack; but in the wider war to repress the natives of the Caucasus he does mainly as he is told. If this is Byronic at all, it is of the Byron of *The Corsair*: a consummate egoist. Not a hint of idealism or principle is permitted to occur—or not ostensibly, at any rate.

No, the irony must be about the "time." Pechorin, and Lermontov, treat society and the military exactly as they find them. Russia's slavishness and torpor are taken for granted: there is a matter-of-fact mention of the knout, and later of a dowry of fifty serfs. Drunkenness is endemic in the army; snobbery and favoritism are the rule at the aristocratic health resorts in which the Caucasus abounds. The glorious Russian war to civilize the Muslim tribes

is a squalid and brutal business on both sides. In these circumstances why should Pechorin rouse himself to care about anything? Meeting old Maxim Maximych by chance, in what is for me the most tragic scene in the novel, he snubs him like any young Prince Hal turning away a superfluous Falstaff. Women are creatures whose influence on men is to be resented; if the opportunity arises, revenge can and should be taken for this. Thus the scandal of the novel was occasioned by a young officer of good family who said, in effect, *Here is a mirror. Look into it if you care to, but don't be hypocritical about what you see.*

It might be more rewarding to trace the hidden influence of Pushkin than the relatively blatant traces of Byron. Before his own pointless death Pushkin had begun, to Lermontov's infinite disgust, to compromise with the czar and the establishment. Even in the poem Lermontov wrote on his own hero Pushkin's suspicious end ("Death of a Poet"), he inquired angrily about the way the idol had gone soft: "Why did he shake hands with worthless slanderers? / Why did he trust false words and flattery?"

The hero of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* took his name from the River Onega, in northern Russia. The "hero" of Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*, Grigory Pechorin, was named for the River Pechora, somewhat farther to the north. One Russian critic has pointed out that whereas the Onega flows smoothly to the sea, the Pechora is turbulent and wild. It was obviously part of Lermontov's fictional plan to be more remote and more extreme than his predecessor. This becomes plain when, by a fantastic process of eavesdropping and coincidence, Pechorin learns that the duel into which he is to be provoked will also be a setup for his murder. In riposte he adopts a strategy that allows him to kill his adversary, Grushnitsky, with no more compunction than he would have felt in killing a cockroach. His casual remark to Dr. Werner, and to the landscape, as Grushnitsky's corpse topples into a ravine is a masterpiece of the laconic: "*Finita la commedia!*"

One is more than tempted to speculate that Lermontov made Pechorin do what Pushkin could not: discover

NEW FICTION

A CLOSE READ

What makes good writing good

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ

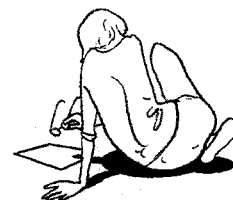
"I liked acting, at that age. You got to dwell on feelings, which were all I dwelt on then anyway, and turn them over, play them out. We had long discussions: would a child afraid of her father show the fear in public? would a man who was in love with a woman talk more loudly when she entered the room? Those who'd had real training (I was not one of them) spoke with scorn about actors who 'indicated,' who tried to display a response without actually feeling it. An audience could always tell. What was new to me here was the idea that insincerity was visible. I understood from this that in real life I was not getting away with as much as I thought." —from "My Shape," in *Ideas of Heaven*, by Joan Silber (Norton)

Like a gymnast off a springboard, Joan Silber begins this, and many other flawlessly pitched paragraphs in her recent story collection, with a punch—a short, simple sentence that establishes a particular. She sticks her landing, too (having traveled some distance in the meantime), with another demonstration of muscle: two final sentences, as arresting in their slow pace and awkward construction as the epiphany they describe. In between this opening and closing Silber's words flow organically.

It's largely sentence variation and balanced rhythm that make this passage pleasing. Silber twins clauses—"You got to dwell on feelings, which were all

I dwelt on"; "turn them over, play them out"; the two questions; "indicated" and its clarification—and these branch like rivulets, adding nuance, while the solid, simple sentences between them lend backbone. There is variety and balance in meaning, as well, in that the paragraph touches on emotion from every angle—experienced, expressed, and observed. Silber's writing is smooth, yes, but it's also liberally spiced. Here, juxtaposing the present and the past, she peppers her lines with gentle mockery as the mature woman looks back at the silly, insubstantial person she once was.

Christina Schwarz is the author of the novels *Drowning Ruth* and *All Is Vanity*.



the plot against his life and then act with ruthlessness and cold decision to ensure that it was the assassin who was assassinated. This makes it the more eerie that he was incapable of such resolution in his own life and death. Czar Nicholas I had denounced *A Hero of Our Time* in a clumsy letter to his wife. (As Anthony Powell, a superior contriver of literary and social coincidence, once phrased it, "In spite of Russia's great size, the number of people who actually operated things politically, socially, culturally, was very small. Thus a poetry-writing subaltern could be a real thorn in the side of the Tsar himself.") When Lermontov was brought to the field of honor, he apparently declined to fire on the fool who had provoked the duel. Slain on the spot, he never heard the czar's reported comment: "A dog's death for a dog." His unflinching indifference on the occasion, however, drew on two well-rehearsed nineteenth-century sce-

narios: the contemptuous aristocrat on the scaffold, and the stoic revolutionary in front of the firing squad. The Decembrists, in their way, admired and emulated both models.

One remaining question will probably never be cleared up. Doris Lessing alludes to it slyly in her foreword to Aplin's translation. "I often wonder," Pechorin says, "why I'm so persistent about winning the love of a young girl I don't want to seduce and will never marry. What's the point of this feminine coquetry?" The "feminine coquetry" here is not in the female. Nabokov makes the same point in a different way, by remarking,

Lermontov was singularly inept in his descriptions of women. Mary is the generalized young thing of novellettes, with no attempt at individualization except perhaps her "velvety" eyes, which however are forgotten in the course of the story. Vera is a mere phantom, with a phantom

LETTERS EXCHANGE

Why Marc Cooper ("Thinking of Jackasses," April Atlantic) refers to Al Franken as a "showbiz clown" is puzzling. Once a clown, Franken is now dead serious (and often funny), and right on the political mark. David Foster Wallace's prediction ("Host," April Atlantic) that Air America and Ed Schultz "are not likely to succeed" is equally questionable. A ringing response to the dire need for the kind of radio Franken and Schultz give us is building, because they are committed to the truth of what is really going on. They are serious critics, urging us to cry for a wake-up call. They do their homework, always correct themselves when they are wrong, conduct informed interviews, and never muffle dissenting voices.

Franken, Schultz, Randi Rhodes, and their core group provide a compelling challenge to the prevalent right-wing invective on talk radio. If hand-wringing Democrats listen, maybe we can get somewhere.

Elizabeth Van Deusen

Riverside, Calif.

Marc Cooper replies:

Elizabeth Van Deusen doesn't know how correct she really is. Her appraisal of Al Franken and Air America as providers of the "ringing response" to a "dire need," with a commitment "to the truth of what is really going on," clearly evidence the sort of self-referential, therapeutic view of politics now prevalent among liberals—just what I described in my review. Van Deusen apparently relies on Franken to tell her what she already suspects: that The Truth Is Out There (even as the Bush administration spends all its waking hours trying to hide it).

If Franken and Co. were truly engaged in effective politics, they wouldn't even be talking to Van Deusen and her fellow liberals but, instead, directing their spiel over their heads at the uninitiated and uncommitted.

Having forced myself to listen to several hours' worth of Air America, I would say that Franken, Rhodes, Schultz, and Janeane Garofalo are, more than "dead serious," simply—in radio terms—deadly. Smug, self-satisfied, and morally superior, they play directly into the Limbaugh-O'Reilly caricature by giving the Democrats the voice—if not the face—of a clique of shrill, spoiled performers and clowns.

birthmark on her cheek; Bela, an Oriental beauty on the lid of a box of Turkish delight.

The Casanova complex—a hectic and indiscriminate pursuit of women who are not truly desired—is sometimes suspected of being a masking symptom of the repressed homosexual. Byron's frantic activity in this sphere (or do I mean in these spheres?) has long been a subject in its own right. Powell mentions that although the duel that extinguished Pushkin was apparently about his wife's supposed adultery, "there were also homosexual undercurrents in the circles involved."

Pechorin is described from several perspectives in the novel: by his old friend, by himself, and by a third party, who speaks of his skin as having "a sort of feminine delicacy." Lermontov himself, according to Turgenev, was considerably stooped and bowed by childhood maladies, giving him an appearance that—at least in youth—was fascinating rather than repulsive. The feminine fictional character seems to have had some will to live, whereas the masculine actual one had a strong need to throw his life away. ■

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and a columnist for Vanity Fair.

BOOKS

After School

Jonathan Coe's idealistic students enter the twenty-first century

BY ELIZABETH JUDD

Twenty years out of King William's School, in Birmingham, a group of friends first introduced in *The Rotters' Club* binge on "slightly morbid nostalgia" in what amounts to a cautionary tale for the precocious. Benjamin Trotter, a dreamy, dispirited accountant, has spectacularly reneged on his early promise; unhappily married, he doggedly polishes a long, unpublished manuscript and carries an increasingly embarrassing torch for the high school sweetheart who vanished without a word in the intervening years. A chronic self-saboteur, Benjamin now loses the flattering attentions of the mysterious Malvina to his younger brother, Paul, a humorless celebrity politician who allies himself with Tony Blair and acquires a reputation for commenting on "newsworthy topics: even (or perhaps especially) those in which he had no particular expertise." Paul is unrepentantly grasping, and therefore distasteful to Benjamin and his more idealistic—if arguably more hypocritical—crowd. Doug Anderton, the only leftist journalist on an increasingly New Labour paper, represents the compromises made in middle age as he

offers lame excuses for enjoying his glamorous wife's wealth: "I haven't given up on the class war, you know. I'm behind enemy lines, that's all."

Messy and brimming, *The Closed Circle* owes nothing to minimalism's sleekly competent aesthetic. With a nineteenth-century novelist's discursiveness and

reach, Coe gives us a meditation on the consequences of terrorism, an examination of the post-9/11 political zeitgeist (beneath Britain's apathy one character senses "a terrible, seething frustration"), a satire of everything from book reviewers to modern parenting, and a contemporary version of Anthony Powell's sprawling masterpiece, *A Dance to the Music of Time*, which he has acknowledged as a model. *The Closed Circle* would be easy to skewer for its mind-boggling coincidences and armchair analysis (rarely does Coe show when he can tell, tell, tell), but it redeems itself with boundless energy and a cheerful capaciousness. In the end Coe's protagonists emerge unscathed from his dizzying panorama, comically and endearingly wed to the shaky premises cobbled together in youth. ■

Elizabeth Judd is a writer who lives in Washington, D.C.

THE CLOSED CIRCLE

by Jonathan Coe
Knopf

PURSUITTS & RETREATS

JUNE 2005 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

ORAL HISTORY

The Kissinger Transcripts

A selection from recently released material in the National Archives

BY JAMES WARREN

Henry Kissinger must be hoping that his own secretly recorded words won't haunt his legacy, as Richard Nixon's haunted his. The two men used different means to preserve their telephone conversations. Nixon installed a voice-activated taping system that caught everything, whereas Kissinger had secretaries listen in on his phone calls, take notes in shorthand, and type them up. But the results were the same: voluminous records clearly intended for private use. In the instances in which Kissinger did tape conversations, he had the tapes (but not the transcripts) destroyed.

Shortly before leaving office, in 1977, Kissinger donated the transcripts to government archives, stipulating that, among other things, none of them be released during his lifetime. But, as with Nixon's recordings, researchers pressed successfully for access to the material. Some 20,000 pages of the transcripts, covering Kissinger's tenure as Nixon's national-security adviser, from 1969 to 1974, and as Nixon's secretary of state, from 1973 to 1974, were opened to the public last year by the National Archives and Records Administration, in College Park, Maryland. They reveal a man of intelligence, charm, and humor—and one exquisitely skilled at using those qualities to manipulate the people around him. They also demonstrate Kissinger's temper and his extreme sensitivity about his public image.



Herewith excerpts from several of Kissinger's conversations. They have been edited to correct the spelling and punctuation errors rampant in the transcriptions and because of space constraints.

HOLD THAT COMMENT!

Kissinger was perturbed by a story that ran in Women's Wear Daily in May of 1971, in which Kandy Stroud insinuated that he was entertaining guests at an upscale Washington restaurant at the taxpayers' expense. Although the publication had a small circulation (about 85,000) in comparison with its competitors, such as Vogue and Harper's Bazaar, it was the most influential fashion publication at that time, and Stroud was a high-profile society reporter—facts that surely heightened Kissinger's agitation. He called WWD's publisher to complain.

Henry Kissinger and James Brady, May 18, 1971

HK: I was calling about an item which appeared last Thursday ...

JB: The one about your reported expenditures at various restaurants?

HK: I consider that outrageous ... One, I don't have an expense account, and two, I have never charged any meal to the president, and three, the figures are absurd ... I think it is close to being libelous, but I'm not making it a legal case, just an ethical one ...

JB: I would be glad to run a statement from you.

HK: I don't do that.

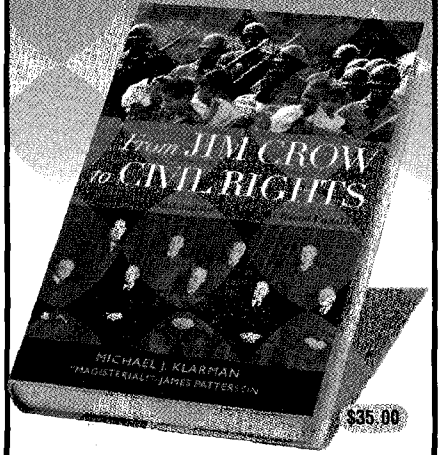
JB: You don't want to write a statement of clarification?

HK: I think *you* owe *me* one.

JB: Well, I don't know the facts.

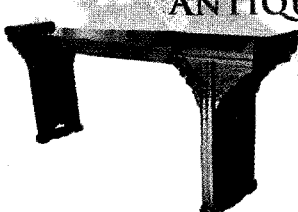
HK: Do you think it is a fair thing to

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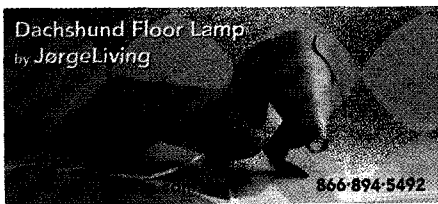
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suggest without even knowing if I have an expense account? ...

JB: If we had called and said we had a story, and what about it ...

HK: But she [Stroud] didn't do that.

JB: She didn't?

HK: No ... But even if the facts were true, which is absurd, it's my own business.

JB: But it *is* rather interesting. You are a public figure ...

HK: Straighten out the facts! You go to a maître d' who is trying to build himself up, and I don't then feel it's *my* job to write a letter.

JB: Well, I don't know what the facts are ... I will have to talk with Kandy. I will call you back.

Henry Kissinger and Kandy Stroud, May 18, 1971

HK: Kandy?

KS: Henry, when are you going to take me to dinner?

HK: I want a correction.

KS: What do you mean? ...

HK: On what you wrote on May 13. The idea I would charge the government for lunches or dinners is an outrage.

KS: It was speculation. I said, "I wonder if."

HK: What if you said, "I wonder if he murdered his mother"?

KS: I said, "I wonder if it came out of an expense account."

HK: Furthermore, I have eaten at the Sans Souci five times since February 18 ... You have me there ten times for lunch and frequently for dinner.

KS: I will be happy to publish what you say.

HK: I will not be quoted.

KS: How would you like it printed?

HK: Just say you looked into it and you found it was not true.

KS: What about Paul's [the maître d's] statement?

HK: It's just not true.

KS: You have never taken people on an expense account?

HK: No. I pay it out of my pocket. I am going broke in this job ... It wouldn't be anybody's business if I ate all my meals at the Sans Souci with six women. But the implication that I would take government money is ...

KS: I will print what you said.

HK: But not quoting.

KS: How do we prove it's not true?

HK: You can say you checked into it and found I do not take government expense money for eating in public restaurants.

KS: Do you have a total of your expense money?

HK: I wouldn't give it to you if I had it. It's my business what I spend on food. But it's ridiculous to say I go eight or ten times a month for lunch to the Sans Souci ... You say I have been there that many times with a tall dirty blonde.

KS: It was a brunette?

HK: That is the sort of gossip I *don't* ask you to correct. But the government money ... For God's sake, this is a point of honor! ...

KS: Can I see you sometime?

HK: You correct it first, and then I will see you.

Henry Kissinger and James Brady, May 18, 1971

JB: I talked to Kandy ... I think it fair for us to run something in our Eye page saying *Women's Wear Daily* has learned that the figures stated were highly inflated and has also learned that Mr. Kissinger's expenses are handled by himself and not by the government or any government agency.

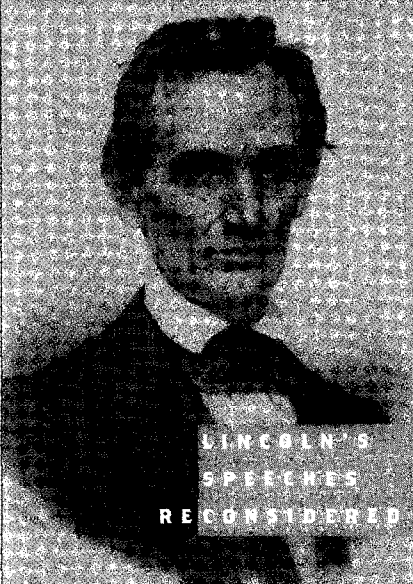
HK: If you did that, it would meet all my concerns.

MANAGEMENT ADVICE

On September 14, 1971, an account appeared in the press of a meeting in Saigon between General Creighton Abrams, the head of the U.S. military in South Vietnam, and Senator George McGovern, who would run against Nixon in the 1972 election. McGovern told reporters that Abrams had indicated that all U.S. troops would leave Vietnam after a peace treaty was signed. Nixon and Kissinger were furious about what they deemed Abrams's gross indiscretion, and about related Pentagon leaks. That evening Kissinger vented in calls to Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and (after speaking with Nixon, who complained that Abrams both drank and talked too much) Admiral Thomas Moorer, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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—Harvey C. Mansfield, Harvard University



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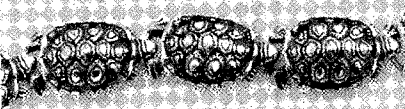
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Henry Kissinger and Melvin Laird, September 14, 1971

HK: Mel, I was just talking to the president. We have been reading the *Star* story. We don't know what to do about the Pentagon.

ML: That's just a cheap story!

HK: Pentagon sources.

ML: Did you read my press conference about a week ago?

HK: No. Couldn't everybody just shut up?

ML: You can't get the reporters to shut up.

HK: I don't *mean* the reporters. Who the hell is Abrams to say there will be no residual forces?

ML: McGovern came out of the meeting with Abrams and said [the] Vietnamization program eventually would provide for the total withdrawal ... But no one is talking in the Pentagon. If you are going to take McGovern's—

HK: I don't give a damn about McGovern!

ML: They are absolutely cheap stories ...

HK: If you can just do the maximum to scare your people.

ML: I have done that, but you are going to get these cheap stories ...

HK: I think if you scare your people—

ML: You *can't* scare these people.

HK: Just scare your own people!

Henry Kissinger and Thomas Moorer, September 14, 1971

HK: We have been reading the *Washington Star*. The president and I are just beside ourselves ... the Pentagon story that all troops will be withdrawn, that Abrams comment ...

TM: I don't think he said it.

HK: No military officer is to say one goddamn word about withdrawals!

TM: Right.

HK: They are not to say *anything*—background or on any other basis. The president just called me for the third time, screaming.

TM: I don't think he said it.

HK: The other thing—tell the people in Saigon to shut up! Not just Abrams but the press guys, too.

TM: Fine.

HK: Just fire somebody!

TM: Okay.



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MUM'S THE WORD

Kissinger could be coolly duplicitous, as demonstrated by these same-day conversations, about the upcoming presidential election, with the Time columnist Hugh Sidey and with H. R. Haldeman, Nixon's chief of staff.

**Henry Kissinger and Hugh Sidey,
September 22, 1972**

HS: How are you doing?

HK: Well, we're coming along.

HS: Listen, I'll tell you, we've got a poll coming out next week ... You know, if I were McGovern, I think I would quit.

HK: Can you tell me what it shows? I won't repeat it.

HS: Yes, incredibly confidentially, because—

HK: Yes, I give you my word I won't.

HS: There are now thirty-nine to forty percentage points difference ... It's sixty-some to—oh, gosh, in the twenties or something like that ...

HK: Amazing.

HS: Yeah ... you might get another lease over there.

**Henry Kissinger and H. R. Haldeman,
September 22, 1972**

HRH: Hi. This is Bob.

HK: Are you on a plane?

HRH: I'm on the ground.

HK: But not an open line?

HRH: No, this is secure.

HK: You probably know it already, and it was given to me as very confidential information. Hugh Sidey called. Just taken a poll. It shows the president thirty-nine points ahead ...

HRH: He didn't say when they would put it out?

HK: He was calling me about something else, so he just dropped it in. I'm not supposed to tell it to anyone. He made me promise.

THOSE HYPOCRITES!

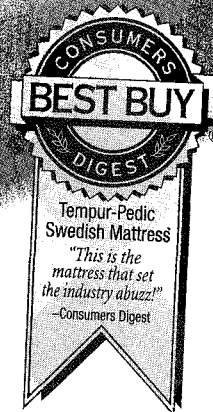
The following conversation, in which Kissinger and Nixon make plans to embarrass the Democrats by disclosing wiretapping activity on the part of Robert F. Kennedy and others, took place against the backdrop of the unfolding Watergate scandal, which would, of course, ultimately reveal that Nixon's secret recording activities were far more extensive than Kennedy's or anyone else's. Kissinger did not realize that he

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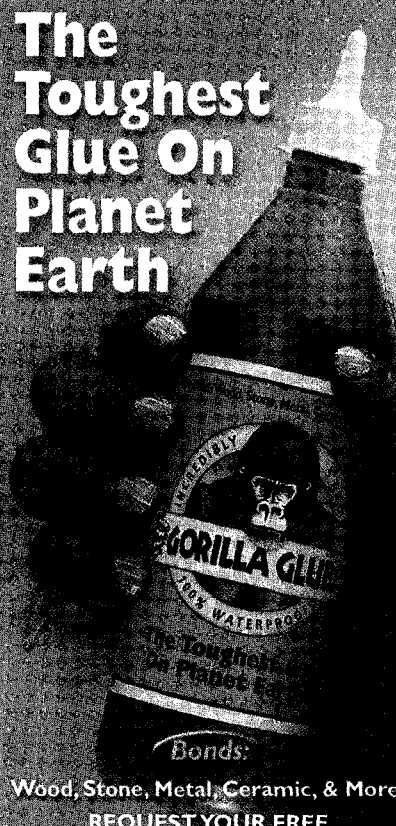
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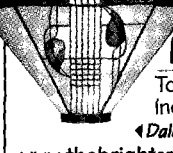
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himself was being taped by Nixon, just as Nixon was unaware that Kissinger was having his secretaries document their calls.

**Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon,
June 1, 1973**

RN: You had told me that McGeorge Bundy [former national-security adviser to JFK] had the effrontery to tell you that Bobby Kennedy in that period didn't have any taps ... Let's get away from the bullshit. Bobby Kennedy was the greatest tapper—three hundred in 1963—almost three hundred. Two hundred fifty in the rest. And I'm getting the names, and I'm going to publish the names next Thursday ... And let the assholes know that they're going to get this, Henry.

HK: I think you should, absolutely.

RN: Because they have done us in on this thing ... They started it. They want to have a gut fight; they're going to get one ... Now, I want you—now, this is not going to go out till Monday, but leak it to somebody. Talk to one of your liberal friends and say we've got a blockbuster coming out ...

HK: Certainly I can.

RN: You can say, look, this whole business of tapping, they have really opened it up ... Well, Hoover told me. He said Bobby Kennedy had [been] tapping everybody. I think that even *I'm* on that list.

HK: I wouldn't be surprised.

RN: And so my point—I don't mind, but my point is, I don't want this God-damn hypocrisy.

HK: Well, if we can get the names, Mr. President, we ought to put some of them out.

RN: Not some, *all* of them! *Everybody* is going to go out. I'm going to put the whole damn list out.

HK: Well, then they'll force us to put all of *ours* out.

RN: Oh, I don't give a damn about that ... Ours will get out anyway ... [And] don't let McGeorge Bundy give you any of that bullshit anymore.

HK: Okay.

RN: It just gets beyond belief!

HELL, NO, HE WON'T GO!

Even as attempts to cover up the Watergate abuses were unraveling, Nixon and his aides appeared oblivious of the extent

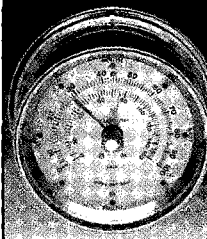
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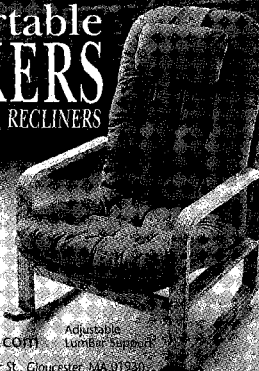
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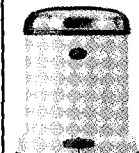
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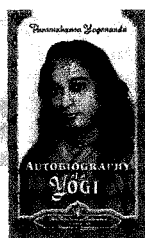
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of the damage. In only a few instances did they acknowledge the possibility of a presidential resignation, and these mentions were fleeting, dismissive, and rife with condescension toward Nixon's opponents.

Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon, June 10, 1973

HK: Mr. President, there is no lack of confidence in you whatsoever. The trouble is that some of these Democratic senators ... The problem is these bastard traitors we have in this country.

RN: Don't let this harping discourage you, Henry, you know. You hear from all of these people, and don't let it discourage you.

HK: Mr. President, you and I have been through a lot of things together. It's always the same things, and these bastards are now trying to deprive you of any success. This has nothing to do—

RN: The real problem is this: they're trying to fight over all the things we beat them on. We beat them on China, we beat them on Russia, we beat [them] on the war ...

HK: It has not a thing to do with Watergate. Watergate just enables them to do those things they would have done anyway ...

RN: These people—it is traitorous, isn't it? You've said that often before in that Oval Office, Henry.

HK: And it was true ...

RN: But we've survived before and we can do it again ... Let's face it. If they come in—well, that's a little while off. Let's suppose we—well, I'm not considering resignation, but taking their argument at its best—Nixon and Agnew should resign and the Congress should name a president. It's unbelievable.

HK: Mr. President, a resignation will be a national catastrophe.

RN: It's never going to come ...

HK: I think, Mr. President, what you can do in the remaining three years—

RN: Oh, for crying out loud, when Harry Truman was twenty percent to twenty-three percent in the polls, he was still pulling off Marshall Plans, and that's what we're in for.

HK: Mr. President, you can go down in history as a man who brought about the greatest revolution in American foreign policy ever.

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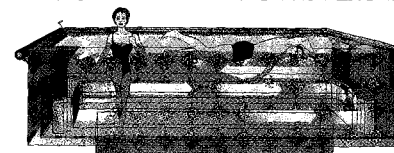
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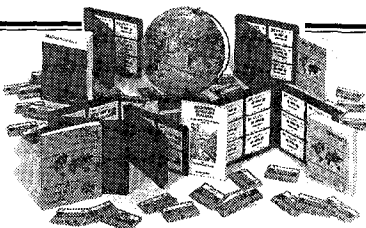
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GETTING NAKED WITH ALLEN

Even longtime Nixon chroniclers are puzzled by a conversation Kissinger had with the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg; no evidence exists that the two men even knew each other. However, Kissinger was clearly conscious of the country's left-leaning elites, and no matter how often he badmouthed them to Nixon and others, he occasionally tried to ingratiate himself with—or at least to humor—them. When Ginsberg phoned Kissinger to propose a meeting between members of the administration (including CIA Director Richard Helms) and various peace advocates (Senator Eugene McCarthy, the antiwar activists Rennie Davis and David Dellinger, and the civil-rights leader Ralph Abernathy), Kissinger took the call.

Henry Kissinger and Allen Ginsberg, April 23, 1971

AG: I am calling at the request partly of Senator McCarthy ... My idea is to arrange a conversation between yourself, Helms, McCarthy, and maybe even Nixon, with Rennie Davis, Dellinger, and Abernathy. It can be done at any time.

HK: I have been meeting with many members representing peace groups, but what I find is that they have always then rushed right out and given the contents of the meeting to the press. But I like to do this, not just for the enlightenment of the people I talk to but to at least give me a feel of what concerned people think. I would be prepared to meet in principle on a private basis.

AG: That's true, but it is a question of personal delicacy. In dealing with human consciences, it is difficult to set limits.

HK: You can't set limits to human consciences, but—

AG: We can try to come to some kind of understanding.

HK: You can set limits to what you say publicly.

AG: It would be even more funny to do it on television.

HK: What?

AG: It would be even more useful if we could do it naked on television.

HK: [Laughter] ▀

James Warren is a deputy managing editor of the Chicago Tribune. Excerpts from his transcriptions of conversations taped by Richard Nixon appeared in The Atlantic last September.

ANSWERS TO THE MAY PUZZLER

C	O	B	B	L	E	L	E	G	R	O	O	M
L	U	L	U	O	V	E	T	O	E	D	G	A
I	R	U	S	S	I	A	N	A	N	G	R	Y
P	A	R	I	S	T	B	A	T	T	L	E	D
A	M	E	N	T	A	L	O	N	O	I	T	A
R	I	N	G	A	R	E	N	A	U	T	R	Y
T	G	A	O	L	E	N	I	N	T	M	A	A
M	A	M	B	O	N	I	O	N	B	U	L	B
O	S	E	V	N	A	N	N	Y	U	S	E	S
S	I	L	I	C	O	N	E	E	G	R	E	T
C	O	R	A	L	K	R	E	M	L	I	N	A
O	W	S	T	A	R	E	D	I	E	T	U	I
W	A	G	E	W	A	R	S	T	R	E	W	N

"Sightseeing"

The central entry in the grid's Red Square is LENIN.

Across: a. CO(BB)LE; LE + GROOM b. LU + LU (lieu + lieu homophone); VET + OED c. AN(CRY) d. PAR + IS; BATT(L)ED e. A + MEN f. A(U) + TRY g. MAM + BO (mom + beau homophone) h. USES (hidden) i. SILI(C)ON (in soil anag.); (r)EGRET j. CO(R)AL k. STAR + ED; ETUI (hidden) l. WAGE(WA)R; S(STR)EWN Down: m. CLI + PART n. A + MIG + AS; I + OW + A o. BLUR(b); E(NAME)L p. BU(SIN)G; OBVIATE (anag.) q. LO(S)S r. EVITA (anag.); O + KRA (ark rev.) s. ETNA (rev.); NEEDS (homophone) t. EMIT (rev.) u. R(ENT)OUT; BUGLER (anag.) v. LIT + MUS; RITE (homophone) w. OGRE (rev.); TRALEE (anag.) x. A + B + STAIN



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Central Intelligence

Each numbered row or column is filled by two words, clued in order but with no answer lengths given. These words are to be entered without regard for the diagram's heavy bars. When all answers are in place, each 3 x 3 square will contain eight letters, two of them identical. By placing that repeated letter in the center of each 3 x 3 square, solvers will spell out a phrase descriptive of their handling of this business. Four clue answers are capitalized.

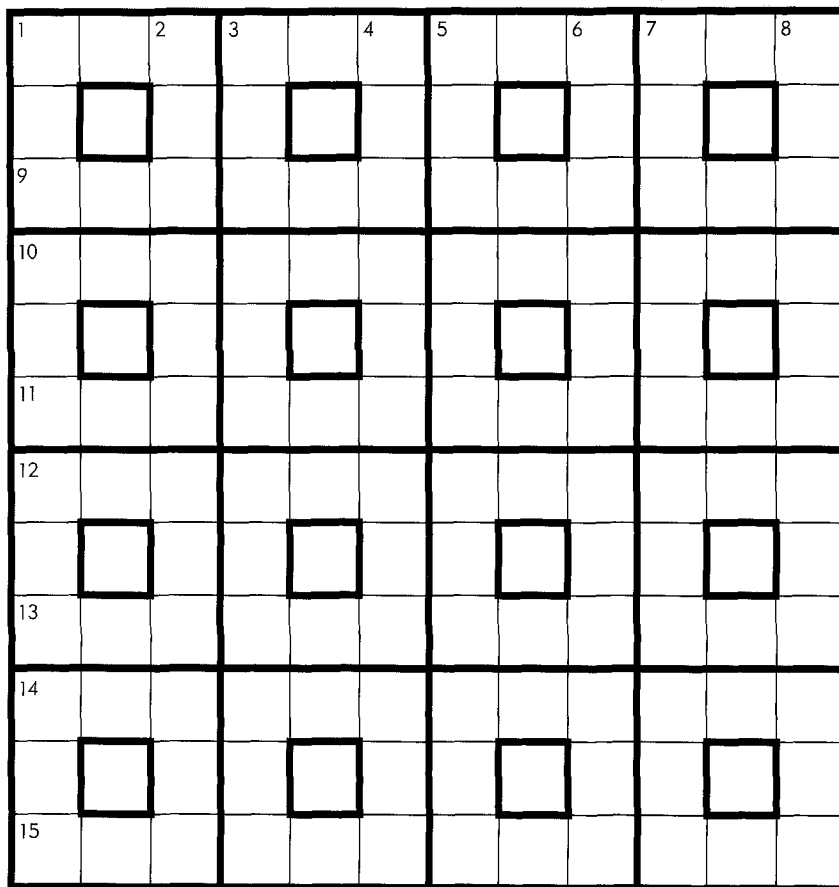
Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 126.

ACROSS

1. Lost in fog, according to hearsay
Collared by Edward, Spot chewed the scenery
9. Thailand's westernmost border foes?
Edible crustaceans pop into stomachs
10. Working hard but lovelessly in floor design
Greek character's pet grape
11. Lover put me in hopper?
Miscreant's ultimate motive for crime
12. Pass time, and stick around
Chief spy group turned old
13. Carol takes bite, engaging in barbed insults
Get an alien spy
14. Use a PC set within reach
Author right in the middle of washing
15. Hunter's living quarters in back
Fork stuck into fish for test

DOWN

1. Rather dull color was of substance
Examine unfinished stint
2. Hawk possesses medium sense of perception
Most saw well
3. Seem pleased about one comparison
Chief of police in crime finale
4. Note of the scale in awful hymn
Theodore keeps relative ragged
5. Charm of Latin and English, in retrospect
Acting governor, for example, in rift
6. Initially, old dogs don't sense chances
Wood lodge for a Navajo in springtime
7. Follow team's leader on run
City of New Orleans
8. Aloofness of Ollie's partner surrounded by tumblers
Bit of trivial clothing is just one of those things?



Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

SCOTT SUMMERVILLE, of Bisbee, Arizona, writes, "Have you noticed the horrid proliferation of unnecessary commas used to separate adjectives? Recent examples from respectable publications include *small, gray vest*, *a beautiful, young girl*, and *a rich, white lady*. I even caught the brilliant David Denby writing about a girl in a *bright, pink-and-yellow uniform*. It's time to put a stop to this unfortunate trend. Would you help educate the public in this matter?"

I'll try—but I'm afraid the problem is more like a persistent confusion than it is an abominable new trend.

Whether two adjectives should be separated by a comma is not always easy to decide, even though the rule usually given is a simple one. *The Chicago Manual of Style* puts it this way: "When a noun is preceded by two or more adjectives that could, without affecting the meaning, be joined by *and*, the adjectives are normally separated by commas. But if the noun and the adjective immediately preceding it are conceived as a unit, such as 'little girl,' 'political science,' or 'glass ceiling,' no comma should be used."

Of course, those possibilities aren't mutually exclusive, nor are they the only ones. *Small gray vest*, *beautiful young girl*, *rich white lady*—no problem. Certain other combinations of adjectives and nouns, however, can leave a writer bewildered. Take "a big fat sigh of relief," for example. Is that a sigh that's big and fat (*big, fat sigh*)? Or is it a fat sigh that's big (*big fat sigh*)?

For many years my lodestar with respect to such commas has been the punctuation section of Wilson Follett's *Modern American Usage*. Not all of the advice in this book is beyond reproach. Nonetheless, Follett's description of the difference between what he calls "superposed" and "parallel" adjectives makes more sense to me than any other

discussion of the subject I've seen. Follett says, "Suppose we want to write *He was wearing his battered old canvas fishing hat*. Are the adjectives here parallel to one another? Far from it. A thoughtful, constructive, entertaining speech is a speech that is (1) thoughtful, (2) constructive, and (3) entertaining; but a battered old canvas fishing hat is not a hat that is (1) battered, (2) old, (3) canvas, and (4) fishing. The adjectives lie in different planes and bear unequal relations to one another and to their noun. One might truthfully say that each modifier belongs to every-



thing that comes after it ... There is in fact no place in this sentence for a legitimate comma." If "battered old" doesn't merit a comma, I'd say neither does "big fat."

The idea of "superposing" adjectives, or not, is what I cling to: Does the first adjective apply to everything that comes after it (no comma), or to the noun only (comma, please)? Or might that adjective even be doing something else? Was it a "bright pink-and-yellow" uniform that David Denby was describing, or a "bright-pink and yellow" one? Surely the former. And with that, I think we can breathe a big fat sigh of relief.

KERSTEN HORN, of Austin, Texas, writes, "I am writing about your response to a question in the April

Word Court about whether *fiancés* can refer to the bride together with the groom. You said it cannot. Your advice is quite misguided. In French the plural male form is *fiancés* and the plural female form is *fiancées*. For a couple or a group that consists of both sexes, the default is the male plural form: *fiancés*. This is the norm in Romance languages. As for *alumni* and *alumnae*, which you also discussed, *alumnae* refers to female graduates, and *alumni* either to male graduates or to a group consisting of both males and females."

Now that you—and other readers—have mentioned it, I would like to retract some of what I said in April. Let's go back to the passage where I wrote that "anyone who cares whether [*alumni* and *alumnae*] mean the same thing in English as they do in Latin, and who recognizes the Latin ending on *alumni* as a masculine plural" will prefer *alumni* and *alumnae* for mixed groups.

Cross out that dubious assertion, and replace it with what you just said about *fiancés* and *alumni*. But then please add the following: Until a few decades ago it was common in English, too, to use a masculine plural when referring to a mixed group—and it was standard to use the masculine singular for any person whose sex was unknown. For better or for worse, for richer language or for poorer, American English now tends to reject those solutions. Probably the best way to solve the problem about which my original correspondent wrote—as still other readers pointed out—would be to sidestep it and call the twosome an *engaged couple*, *affianced*, or something else in which the words have no gender.

Do you have a language dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

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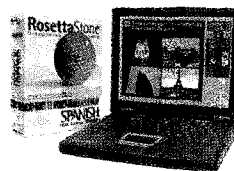
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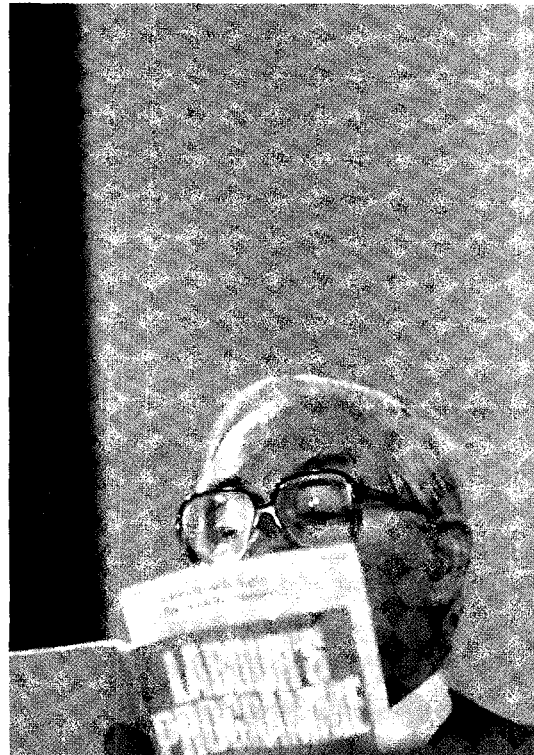
James Callaghan (1912–2005)

BY MARK STEYN

The past may be, as L. P. Hartley wrote, another country, but it's rarely as foreign as Britain in the 1970s. Viewed from the United Kingdom of 2005, the day before yesterday is a banana republic without the weather. Inflation was up over 25 percent, marginal tax rates were up over 90 percent, and the only thing heading in the other direction was the pound, which nosedived so suddenly in 1976 that the chancellor of the exchequer, en route to an International Monetary Fund meeting, was summoned back from the departure lounge at Heathrow to try to talk his currency back up to sub-basement level. Her Majesty's government had itself applied for a \$4 billion loan from the IMF. Were the Britain of thirty years ago to re-emerge Brigadoon-like from the mists, it would be one of those basket cases that Bono hectors Bush about debt forgiveness for.

Such great Britons as the era could muster—Roger Moore, Michael Caine—had decamped to Switzerland and Beverly Hills. As if to underline the national decline, every flailing industry flew the moth-eaten flag: British Steel, British Coal, British Leyland. They were all owned by the state—even the last, which was the national automobile manufacturer. The government had taken all the famous British car marques—Austin, Morris, Rover, Jaguar, Triumph—and merged them into one. That's right: the government made your car. Or, rather, a man called Red Robbo did, when he was in the mood, which wasn't terribly often. He was the local union man at the Leyland plant in Birmingham, though he seemed to spend more time outside the gate, picketing. In Britain union leaders were household names, mainly because they were responsible for everything your household lacked. In the seventies if you opened *The Times* (when the print unions weren't on strike) or watched the BBC news (when

the miners weren't on strike and the government hadn't ordered the TV to close down mid-evening to conserve electricity), it was a parade of eminences from strange, unlovely acronyms such as ASLEF and SOGAT and NATSOPA and NACODS being received by the prime minister as if they were heads of state, which in a sense they were. Britain's system of government in the seventies



was summed up in the phrase “beer and sandwiches at Number Ten”—which meant the union leaders showing up at Downing Street to discuss what it would take to persuade them not to go on strike, and being plied with the aforementioned refreshments by a prime minister reduced to the proprietor of a seedy pub, with the cabinet as his barmaids. The beer and sandwiches went only so far, and would usually be followed a day or two later by chaotic scenes on the evening news of big, burly blokes striking for their right to continue enjoy-

ing the soft, pampering workweek of the more effete Ottoman sultans.

The man who presided over the death throes of this ramshackle realm was James Callaghan, prime minister from 1976 to 1979, and an instructive study for all those obituarists of President Ronald Reagan who were so anxious last June to attribute his success to a genial disposition, sense of humor, charming smile, tilt of the head, etc. If you want to know what Reaganesque affability without political will or philosophy boils down to, look at Callaghan. He was famously avuncular; he was known as Sunny Jim. But by the time he and his Labour government left office, the sunniness had decayed into torpid complacency. His most famous words were “Crisis? What crisis?”—which he never actually said, but were put in his mouth by an enterprising headline writer from Rupert Murdoch's *The Sun*. And they fit so well that they stuck.

The non-crisis of the regime began in an attempt to control the endless ping-pong of runaway inflation and runaway pay increases to keep up with it. The government proposed a five percent limit on raises, with penalties for companies that flouted the limit. This sounded a bit low to the Labour Party's union allies, and the car workers decided that the very proposal was worth striking over. When Ford's UK subsidiary settled with a 15 percent increase, Callaghan attempted to impose penalties on the company; but Parliament declined to support him, and the unions set out to teach him a lesson. The municipal manual workers demanded a 40 percent wage increase and then struck. The truck drivers went on strike for a more modest 30 percent. The garbage collectors followed, and in parts of the country the gravediggers.

In January of 1979 the prime minister left for a summit in Guadeloupe, and on the news bulletins scenes from the

coldest British winter in sixteen years, with the streets full of trash and the dead unburied, alternated with footage from the Caribbean of a relaxed Callaghan in open-necked shirt, working on his tan with the other colossi of the age—Jimmy Carter, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, and Helmut Schmidt. To his shivering citizenry, Sunny Jim was spending too much time sunning himself. When he landed at Heathrow, he was besieged by the press and grumbled back, “I don’t think that other people in the world would share the view that there is mounting chaos”—which *The Sun’s* man so lethally distilled. Callaghan had a point: the “mounting chaos” of the so-called Winter of Discontent was, in truth, only a slightly more extreme version of business as usual.

Four months later the Labour government fell, the country turned to Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative Party, and Jim Callaghan faded into history as a unique footnote—the only politician to hold all four of the kingdom’s great offices of state: prime minister, chancellor of the exchequer, home secretary, and foreign secretary.

Leonard James Callaghan was born in 1912 in Portsmouth, and raised in poverty. When he was nine, his father died. His mother struggled until the Labour government of 1924 belatedly gave her a widow’s pension of ten shillings a week, helping to cement her son’s political loyalties. At seventeen he was taken on as a clerk by the Inland Revenue for a pound a week; but dissatisfied with conditions, he joined the union, and worked his way up to national assistant secretary.

He was never exactly a socialist firebrand—not compared with the fellows who brought him down decades later—but he was capable of righteous working-class indignation. When the Conservatives denounced big government as a denial of individual freedom, Prime Minister Callaghan snapped back, “I was brought up after my father

died in a family which lived in two furnished rooms. That was a denial of freedom.” Away from the public eye, among his party’s swollen ranks of alleged “thinkers,” Sunny Jim could be rather chippy about the furnished rooms and leaving school at sixteen.

He had nothing to be ashamed of: time has proved most of the thinkers hopelessly wrong on everything. But Jim Callaghan’s safe-pair-of-hands, steady-as-she-goes, don’t-frighten-the-horses approach doesn’t have much to show for itself either. He once confided to a friend of mine that he thought Britain’s decline was irreversible and that the government’s job was to manage it as gracefully as possible. He wasn’t alone in this: an entire generation of British politicians, on both sides of the aisle, felt much the same way. So Callaghan rose onward and upward, “managing” problems rather than solving them. As home secretary in 1969, he sent troops to quell the civil unrest in Northern Ireland, and pessimistic colleagues fretted that they might be there for six months. They have stayed there three decades, not to defeat the IRA but to manage an eternal stalemate. As foreign and commonwealth secretary in 1974, he chose not to send troops to Cyprus after the Turks invaded—actually, he didn’t even need to send them: there are British military bases on the island. So even though Britain was a guarantor of Cypriot sovereignty, he opted to “manage” the problem ineffectually—and the island is divided to this day, with the inevitable UN peacekeepers. In the spring of 1979 the electors decided the ship was so full of leaks that the old steady-hand-at-the-tiller routine was no longer enough; graceful decline was one thing, but Britain in the seventies was becoming ungovernable.

Eleven years later, shortly after the Fall of Thatcher, I was in a pub enjoying a beer with her daughter, Carol, when a punk poet, Seething Wells, decided to have a go at her. After reciting a lengthy catalogue of the Iron

Lady’s crimes against humanity, Seething leaned toward Carol and, stabbing his finger into her face, summed it all up: “Basically, your mum just totally smashed the working classes.”

It has to be said that this indictment loses a lot of its force from the replacement of “Thatcher” (or “Vatcha,” as the tribunes of the masses used to snarl it) with “your mum.” But Seething wasn’t wrong. Basically, Carol’s mum did just totally smash the working classes. Today if one hears that term in Britain, it’s usually from a polytechnic Marxist or a socialist rock star. But twenty-five years ago there was a real “working class,” even if it seemed less and less interested in working. Jim Callaghan was a product of that authentic working class, and so was his party. He was the last “old Labour” prime minister, and when he fell, his comrades lurched left and into the wilderness for two decades. By the time they re-emerged, he was far more of an anachronistic relic of a class-bound society than the queen. His successor, Tony Blair, is a quintessential post-Thatcher politician: the country is in the longest period of economic growth since records began, in 1701. No one now thinks that the government should run airlines and car plants and that workers should live their entire lives in state housing—though what seems obvious to all in 2005 required extraordinary political will by a handful a quarter century ago.

Jim Callaghan was not bitter in defeat; he tended his farm and a beloved wife, who died eleven days before him, and understood that he was merely the chap on duty when the big geopolitical tide of history swept in and washed everything away. Another year or two and Washington might have been asking “Who lost Britain?”—that is, if America’s less sunny Jim, President Carter, hadn’t been peddling his own version of Callaghanite “malaise.” The past is another country, but the seventies is another planet. ■

Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain’s Telegraph Group, the Chicago Sun-Times, and other publications.

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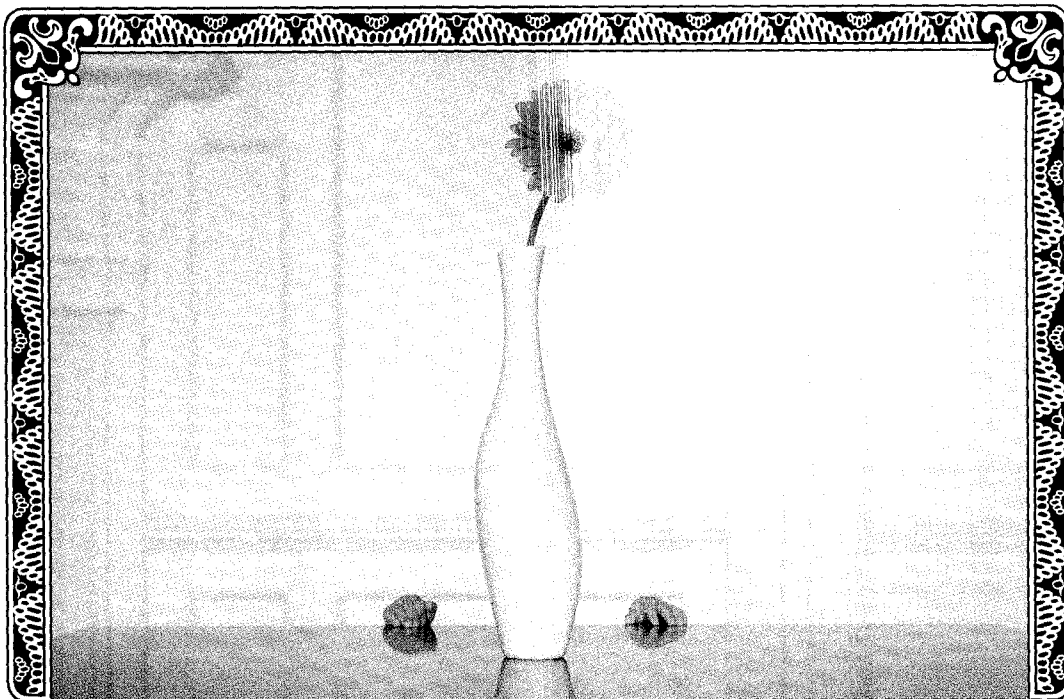


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